

THE  
**CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.**

NEW SERIES—No. 11.

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*For September and October, 1820.*

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THOUGHTS ON TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

CONSIDERED merely in relation to this world, there is no subject, on which it is more important for us to hold correct opinions, than the subject of religion. There are no questions of such interest to us, as those which it proposes to answer. There is no department of knowledge, in which ignorance and error so essentially affect the character and condition of individuals and of society. Determine the relative degrees of virtue and happiness, in different communities ; and you will have determined the relative degrees, in which the influence of correct religious principle is felt ; and, on the other hand, false notions of religion, ignorance and superstition will be found in nearly the same proportions as vice and misery.

There is abundant proof of the fact just stated. We find evidence of it in the condition of the most polished heathen nations, the Greeks and Romans. There is indeed a deceptive glare cast around them by the vivid splendors of art and genius ; and we are liable to be deluded likewise by a vulgar, school-boy admiration of virtues, which never existed but in fancy ; and of which scarce any other show of evidence is to be found, but in some high-sounding epithets, used by such writers as Livy in compliment to their countrymen ; and interpreted at the present day in conformity to our own notions of moral excellence, and not those of a heathen. But putting aside these causes of error, if we examine into the real condition of those ancient nations, we shall find melancholy and decisive evidence of the fact maintained. It will gather round us from every side. Their religion, erroneous, imbecile and corrupting as it was, will be found a true index of

the virtue and happiness which existed ; and the want of some higher principle of moral conduct, than it was capable of furnishing, will appear in the examples of profligacy, injustice and cruelty, which will rise in dark masses to our view ; in the general want of personal security and peace ; in the destitution of domestic comfort and those charities which make life dear to us, and in the loosely compacted machinery and irregular movements of every organized society.

We may look next to the dark ages ; and compare the state of religion, though that religion was called Christianity, with the state of morals and safety and happiness. We may look for further evidence of the truth maintained to Spain and Italy ; or to Turkey and Hindostan. We may consider the tremendous lesson which France has been giving to mankind ; and we may then turn to England and our own country ; and we shall every where perceive the same general correspondence between the notions which prevail concerning religion, whether true or false, and the condition, good or bad, of those by whom they are held.

But we need not recur to the observation of what has been, in order to prove, that the direct influence of religion, properly understood, is in the highest degree beneficial. We have only to consider what must be the operation of the truths which it makes known. For the happiness and consolation of man, it teaches him that he is the creature and care of infinite goodness. To support and animate him in all virtue, it is continually inculcating the truth, that God has made him the arbiter of his own happiness or misery ; and that virtue and happiness are the same. It makes him know and feel that the more good he communicates, the more he enjoys ; and that benevolence, and generosity, and self-devotion are his interest. It places distinctly before him the fact, that there are pleasures of two kinds ; some, which of themselves, by their mere excess and repetition, exhaust the power of enjoyment, and make the soul 'embody and embrate,' leaving it at last without any sensibility but to pain ; and others, which invigorate the faculties, which enlarge our capacities for happiness, whose enjoyment is but a step to higher enjoyment, and this to continue forever. The influence of such religion upon the intellectual is scarcely less than upon the moral part of man. By preserving the mind pure from vice, it preserves its faculties in free and healthy exercise. The truths which it teaches are in themselves the most important ; and they have a bearing upon almost every other interesting speculation. The moral taste which it cultivates is intimately connected with the taste for every other sort of beauty ; and the enlargement and elevation, produced by the habitual contemplation of the infinite, the invis-



ible, and the remote, will manifest themselves in all the operations and purposes of the mind.

Nor are we to estimate the power of religion in a community merely by its direct influence. It affects those who think least of its value. It affects them through public sentiment, by raising the standard of morals, by rendering a certain decorum of manners necessary to any degree of estimation, by the direct action of sympathy with those around them, and by the continual operation of institutions, and modes of thinking and acting, in which the truths of religion are recognized.

But we must not expect a beneficial influence from every thing which is called religion. We must attend to something more than the name; for food and poison have both been called by this name. Religion, considered in the abstract, is a system of truths, and operates upon the mind through faith in these truths. But because these truths are of a nature to yield the most blessed fruits, it does not follow, that a system of opinions, inconsistent with, or contradictory to them, will produce the same effects because men have given the same name to both. If religion be of the highest value, because it affords us as clear notions of the Divinity, as we are capable of receiving; it does not follow that a system is of much value, which confounds our notions of God by unintelligible doctrines respecting his nature. If religion be adapted to produce the most excellent virtues, by holding forth the most powerful motives and sanctions, and requiring that these should be regarded in every moral action; we cannot therefore infer, that the same effect is to be expected from a religion, which grants dispensations and indulgences and pardons for money; or from a religion, which teaches men that the main thing is to perform certain rites and ceremonies, and to regard certain observances; or from a religion, which insists upon the reception of a system of doctrines as the great and sure passport to eternal happiness; and still less from one, which brings virtue into contrast with some other requisition or characteristic; and makes light of the former; and regards it even as a subject of contempt and jealousy in comparison with the latter—denominating all human excellence by some such title, perhaps, as that of *the filthy rags of self-righteousness*. If it be the genuine operation of true religion to produce constant exertion after moral perfectness; because it teaches that good and evil are before us, and that it is for us to choose and attain which we will; we cannot conclude that this will be the operation of a religion, which insists as a fundamental truth upon the doctrine, that we have no moral power, that our condition will not at all depend upon any thing which we may do; but that our eternal happiness or misery has been determined by the pleasure of another being, who has issued his irreversible decrees

without reference to any qualities which he may see in us. True religion is an inestimable blessing ; because it teaches that God is the everlasting Friend and Father of his creatures ; a God of infinite goodness. But what shall we say of a religion, which teaches that he has formed men, so that they are by nature wholly inclined to all moral evil ; that he has determined in consequence to inflict upon the greater part of our race the most terrible punishments ; and that unless he has seen fit to place us among the small number of those whom he has chosen out of the common ruin, he will be our eternal enemy, and infinite tormentor ; that having hated us from our birth, he will continue to exercise upon us forever his unrelenting and omnipotent hatred. Whatever may be the worth of true religion, it surely does not follow, that this system of blasphemy must be also of great value, and very beneficial in its effects. Yet he must be a very ignorant or a very bold man who will affirm, that the doctrines last stated have not been taught, and very extensively too, as fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

With us Christians, religion is identified with Christianity. We receive the truths which it teaches, not because we are able to establish them by the deductions of our reason, but because we believe them to have been taught by God ; because we think that the uncertain deductions of reason have been confirmed by the highest possible authority. But what is Christianity ? A very different thing, unquestionably, from what has been the professed religion of far the greater part of Christians. The proposition may appear startling at first sight ; but consider the state of Christendom from the fourth century to the sixteenth ; and ask yourself, how great was the resemblance between the system of doctrines which prevailed during this period, and the system of truths which was taught by Jesus Christ ? Was Christianity the religion of that Church, which, to use the bold language of the Apocalypse, *made itself drunk with the blood of the Saints* ? When you are satisfied with regard to its faith, you may then examine the scheme of doctrines developed in the Institutes of Calvin ; or rather the same scheme, as it appears perfected in the works of the Westminster Assembly. If any one wholly unacquainted with our religion were told, that this was Christianity ; and that the system taught in these books, was to be found in another collection of books, called the New Testament, I believe his surprise would be uncontrollable and unimaginable, when he came to read the New Testament itself, and to understand what is actually taught there.

If what we regard as Christianity, then, be true and valuable, what are we to think of such systems as those just mentioned ?



Why do we value Christianity ? Because it gives us assurance of certain truths, which we believe to be of infinite importance. These truths constitute our religion. The character which we attach to them is not to be transferred to any thing different, and still less to any thing contradictory. So far as religion is concerned, these truths, and these alone, have operated to improve the condition of men. Whatever is opposed to them, whether it be taught under the name of Christianity or not, is opposed to Christianity. Just in proportion as we regard the latter as valuable, shall we regard the former as pernicious. Just in proportion as we are desirous of promoting the influence of true religion, shall we be desirous of removing all those false doctrines, by which its influence is counteracted and destroyed ; and counteracted and destroyed the more effectually, because they have assumed its name and authority.

There cannot be different systems of equal value. There are not two opposite kinds of truth in religion. Nothing can be more irrational, than a strong attachment to any particular mode of faith, or form of worship, accompanied with indifference about its correctness, and indisposition to inquire into its real character. Nothing can be more loose or inconsistent than his opinions, who thinks religion a great good, but does not think it worth while to examine and determine what particular doctrines religion teaches. If certain truths are of infinite importance, the errors opposed to them are in the highest degree pernicious ; and he who maintains the latter, as if they were of the same nature with the former, is committing a very serious mistake indeed.

It is true, that the worst errors respecting Christianity do not always produce their natural effects. Perhaps they never have produced their full and complete effects. The essential truths of our religion appear so prominently and so distinctly in the revelation which God has given us, they are so conformable to our reason, and so agreeable to our natural sentiments, that they have never been entirely obscured and forgotten among Christians. Their operation, therefore, has been counteracted and diminished, but not entirely prevented. Opposite truths and errors have existed in the same mind, and mutually controlled each other's influence. Nay, in many minds, these errors seem to have existed merely in the form of speculation ; and to have been met and overborne, whenever they tended to any practical result, by natural good sense, correct moral principles, and sincere piety. The practical religion of men is often a very different thing from their professed religion ; or from that contained in the creeds of the sect to which they consider themselves as belonging. Nor may we ever expect to see the whole operation and perfect

results of any false opinions, when those by whom they are maintained, live intermixed with others holding opposite doctrines, whose numbers and character are such as to command respect. It is the tendency of the different opinions of different men to act upon and modify each other. A man without any religion will be a very different person, if he live in the midst of a religious community, from what he would have been in a society of men equally destitute of religious principle with himself; and the case is similar with him whose religion is erroneous. The characters of men are, without doubt, affected by many other causes beside the errors of the religious creed which they may profess.

We believe, and we rejoice to believe, that there have been men of excellent virtue in every different faith. But we must recollect, that in estimating the virtue, or rather the merit of individuals, we are continually making allowance for their difference of faith; for the different degrees in which they have attained a knowledge of true religion and of the character of its requirements. We do not expect certain virtues from men under the influence of certain errors. In giving the tribute of our admiration to the moral excellence of Socrates or of Cicero, we have to remember, that Socrates and Cicero were heathens. In going back a century or two, if we should look without horror upon some who have passed even for saints, we must recollect, that they believed religious persecution to be a duty. We are continually applying the same principle, often perhaps unconsciously, in judging of the characters of those whom we regard as holding great errors; and frequently where such errors are entertained, though we may find much to praise, we find also, if not much to censure, at least much to regret.

True, there have been excellent men whose belief on the most important subjects has been very erroneous. But if any one should infer from this fact, that every different faith is equally adapted to produce such men, and that there is no ground therefore in their practical effects for preferring one to another, he would reason in the same manner, as if, having observed that some men do retain their health and live long in insalubrious situations and unhealthy employments, he should conclude that one climate or mode of life is as favourable to health as another. The constitution of man, and the testimony of experience would be no more overlooked in the latter inference than in the former. When it can be shown that men's opinions do not influence their conduct; that there is an entire divorce between their intellect and their principles of action; that men do not perform certain things, because they believe it their interest or duty to perform them; and that religion, which has been regarded as so active a principle in the production of both good and evil, is really nothing more



than an inert subject of speculation ; then it may be inferred, not indeed that it is wholly unimportant whether our religion be true or false, but that it is of little more importance, than whether we believe the system of Newton or Ptolemy respecting the material universe.

To false religion we are indebted for persecutors, and zealots and bigots ; and perhaps human depravity has assumed no forms, at once more odious and despicable, than those in which it has appeared in such men. I will say nothing of persecution ; it has passed away, I trust, forever ; and torture will be no more inflicted, and murder no more committed, under pretence of extending the spirit and influence of Christianity. But the temper which produced it still remains ; its parent bigotry is still in existence ; and what is there more adapted to excite thorough disgust, than the disposition, the feelings, the motives, the kind of intellect and degree of knowledge, discovered by some of those who are pretending to be the sole defenders and patrons of religious truth in this unhappy world, and the true and exclusive heirs of all the mercy of God ? It is a particular misfortune, that where gross errors in religion prevail, the vices of which I speak have shewn themselves especially in the clergy ; and that we find them ignorant, narrow-minded, presumptuous, and, as far as they have it in their power, oppressive and injurious. The disgust which this character, in those who appear as ministers of religion, naturally produces, is often transferred to Christianity itself. It ought to be associated only with that form of religion by which those vices are occasioned. But such mistakes are continually made ; because men do not discriminate between the different systems of faith, which have passed under the name of Christianity ; nor recognize the very different effects which they are adapted to produce.

It is indeed questionable, whether the direct influence of the errors which have been connected with Christianity, upon those by whom they are held, is equally mischievous with their indirect consequences. They are, it cannot be doubted, among the most operative causes of unbelief ; and of what probably is much more common among us, and what we have so much reason to lament, indifference and skepticism in respect to religion. A system of doctrines is presented to men, at which their minds revolt ; and they are told that this is Christianity. A *gospel* is proposed to them, whose first aspect belies its name. If they are prevented from rejecting our religion altogether, by perceiving something of that character of divinity which belongs to it, and cannot be wholly obscured, by the authority of so many excellent men who have regarded it as the foundation of their hopes, and by some

knowledge of the evidences of its truth ; yet still such misrepresentations will not be without their effect. Men will in consequence regard religion as a subject of habitual doubt and perplexity, an irksome topic of contemplation, one from which their minds will be always ready to escape. It will thus be prevented from mingling with their thoughts ; it will not direct their common purposes ; it will not influence their affections ; it will not establish its authority in their hearts. Nay such will often be the case, even when, for want of knowing any thing better, they have at last brought themselves to assent to that form of religion, in which alone it has been distinctly presented to their minds.

The extravagant errors which have been forced into an unnatural union with Christianity, may be traced back to ages, from which we consent to receive no other of our opinions. They derived their origin from men, whose speculations on every other subject would command at the present day but little deference. He would be regarded only with wonder or ridicule, who should think it worth while to quote Athanasius, or Augustine, or Calvin, or Turretin, as an authority upon any topic, except the peculiar theological doctrines which they maintained. The mysteries of the later Platonists, with the exception of the mystery of the Trinity, are at the present day treated with not much respect ; and though the schoolmen have been our masters, we think it little worth while to study their writings, and forget to whom we have been indebted. Thus it is, that religious doctrines, which had their birth in ages of ignorance, of false principles, and false reasoning, still remain in full vigour ; though all the rest of the brotherhood of errors of which they made a part, has long since perished. They remain disconnected from all the modes of conception and habits of mind, among which they had their origin. They remain standing insulated and unsupported, except by their connexion with each other. They are at variance with all the knowledge, and all the opinions and sentiments of our age upon every related subject. If we should take up any one of the standard authors upon these subjects, any one of those, whose reputation is highest, as a writer on natural religion, on morals, on the science of the human mind, or as skilful in the development of the human character, and in the midst of our reading, should chance to recollect some of the doctrines of technical theology, such as might easily be pointed out, we should at once perceive how strangely they come athwart the whole current of our thoughts, and how irreconcilable they are with all that is best established in human knowledge. We are transferred from the region of all certain or probable truth, from all those topics of contemplation among which the mind loves to dwell, into quite a



new field of speculation, very barren, and desert, and hideous, and lying, if I may so speak, out of the limits of the habitable world. Let any one, while reading the fine arguments, and beautiful illustrations of Paley respecting the goodness of God, bring to mind that doctrine which teaches that this is a ruined world, that the far greater proportion of men are doomed from their birth to inevitable woe, that there is 'a curse of God upon the creatures for our sake;' and that with the exception of a privileged few, who do not contribute much to brighten the prospect, we see nothing about us but sin and its punishments; in the shock which this horrible doctrine will give to all the affections and feelings that fill his mind, he may perceive one proof, among many, of the direct contrariety of which I speak, between what reason and revelation teach, and what has been taught by false theology; between the traditionary doctrines of the latter, and the best conclusions of enlightened philosophy.

But we find that there are many claiming to be exclusively Christians, who are continually insisting that doctrines, such as those to which I have alluded, constitute the essential truths and characteristic features of our religion; and who raise a passionate outcry against all who endeavour to vindicate Christianity from the imputation. The creeds of every established church in Christendom teach such doctrines. The whole body of the clergy in every such church may be divided into three classes—those who heartily believe the doctrines of their creed; the smaller number, I suspect, by far;—those who by repeated efforts, and by carefully limiting their inquiries, have succeeded in silencing their own doubts, and in persuading themselves, that these doctrines admit of a plausible defence—and in the last place, a very considerable number indeed, and perhaps the most injurious to the interests of religion; those who give their solemn assent to the truth of doctrines which they do not believe. And what is the consequence of all this? Let us suppose an acute and intelligent man, occupied either in the affairs of the world, in professional studies, or literary pursuits, and whose habits of life have in consequence been such, as to leave him little leisure to make himself acquainted with the science of theology. Let us suppose that from the circumstances of his situation, some one of those systems of error which have assumed the name of Christianity, should have been continually presented to him as Christianity itself. How is he to determine that this pretension is not founded in truth. How is he to know, that what is publicly announced as the religion of Christ, and what those around him who profess to be best acquainted with the subject, zealously affirm to be the religion of Christ, does not in fact deserve the name?

By such a one as we have supposed, however, the popular system would for the most part hardly be thought to deserve serious attention; especially if he should find, that it was in fact disbelieved by a considerable portion of those whose business it is to teach it. If he should happen to take up some one of those books, which contain an exposition and defence of any of the principal forms of error which our religion has been made to assume, it is easy to imagine with what contempt and weariness, with what wonder and disgust, he would turn over the pages. It is not difficult to conceive how surprisingly trifling and inane, many of those statements, which we theologians are accustomed by courtesy to call arguments, would appear to one familiar with common modes of discussion, and with what may be called the practical reasoning of men. You may have a distinct conception of the state of mind to which I allude, if you will imagine one of the more acute writers in the *Edinburgh Review* sitting down to the perusal of Jones' Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, or Magee's book on the Atonement, or any other of a thousand works of a similar character.

Religion is not respected, because it is not understood; because a low, earth-born rival has assumed the name and place of that principle whose origin is from heaven. Can we think it wonderful, that there should be hundreds and thousands in every christian country, who should come to feel little respect for a subject, which has never been fairly presented to their minds, which has always been connected with associations that are offensive or degrading, and about which those have often written and talked the most, who have said nothing but what tended to misrepresent it and expose it to contempt. We see every where the manifest effect of the state of things to which I have adverted. It is not necessary to consider the condition of Catholic countries, where the monstrous corruptions which have been connected with Christianity, have left it scarcely any disciples, except among the lower and more ignorant classes of society. We may see enough of the disastrous consequences of error in Protestant countries, in our own neighbourhood, among those whom we meet in the common intercourse of life. From the causes which have been mentioned, we may account in a great measure for the melancholy phenomenon, that of the most eminent literary men of Scotland for the last sixty or seventy years, so many have been open enemies or very doubtful friends of Christianity. Turn over the pages of the most popular and able literary journal of our times; which exercises so much influence upon the minds of thousands of readers, and than which few other publications will tend more to mark and distinguish the present age;



—you cannot but be struck, I do not say with the infidelity which has occasionally appeared in a few articles, but with a characteristic far more deserving of notice, and which suggests thoughts more serious—it is the general exclusion of every religious topic ; and of nearly all direct reference to Christianity. You would produce scarcely a perceptible change in the character of the work, by striking out every thing which implies that such a religion as Christianity exists in the world. Whatever relates to the highest interests and noblest speculations of man, is excluded ; as if these subjects lay out of the sphere of all true and useful knowledge ; nay, as if there would be something of impertinence and folly in introducing topics borrowed from religion, into writings really intended to influence the sentiments, opinions, and conduct of the more intelligent classes of society. Whether a man believe the truths of religion or not, he must have an intellect singularly constituted, if he affect to despise them. But the doctrines of false theology have long outlived the time when they could command any respect, except from those whose minds have been disciplined to their reception ; and if we will insist on mistaking the latter for the former, it is not strange that such effects should be produced as we see existing.

But the subject presents itself under a still more gloomy aspect. What must be the effect of any of those systems of faith which have assumed the name of orthodoxy, when urged upon the reception of the young. What must be the effect when such a system with its hideous features, and squalid with all the barbarism of a rude and ignorant age, is obtruded upon a mind of warm affections, of unperverted and undisciplined feelings, of quick sensibility, and impatient and hasty and petulant in its judgments. Take such a young man, and persuade him, if you can, to read through the standards of doctrine which your church has sanctioned ; no matter whether that church be episcopal or presbyterian, and no matter whether your standard be the Westminster Catechisms and Confession, or the Thirty-nine Articles. Tell him that this is your religion, and must be his. Lay before him your aggregate of unintelligible doctrines concerning God, and of doctrines which are but too intelligible concerning the condition and prospects of man ; and tell him that the creed which you put into his hands, contains a full exposition of all that is consolatory and delightful and lovely and glorious in religion. If you can bring him to contemplate and understand what you have laid before him, have you any doubt with what loathing and horror he will regard your religion. It is true indeed, that precisely such a case as I have supposed, is not likely to occur. False notions of religion are, for the most part, communicated at an age when they are but imperfectly un-

derstood, and but little attended to ; and before the understanding has learnt to trust its own decisions. They gradually open upon the minds of the young. Their effect, therefore, though similar to what has been described, is not commonly so immediate and striking. It is true also, that as the mind, through the merciful provision of nature, can accommodate itself to almost any circumstances, so it may in time be broken down to tolerate almost any belief. As life advances, various causes may reconcile men to a system of faith, which, according to their different tempers, they had at first regarded with neglect and derision, or with doubt and aversion. But, in the mean time, the character has been formed without religion. The sensual passions have been indulged, vicious habits, and low and selfish feelings have been contracted, the mind has been debased ; and the change produced by adopting an erroneous system of faith, is often but little more than superficial and exterior.

The different systems of religious error which have prevailed among Christians, have usually been employed as very efficacious instruments, in effecting the worldly and criminal purposes of those by whom they have been most zealously supported. They have been made to pander to the ambition and vices of unholy men, pretending to be ministers of God and Christ. They have been brought into intimate union with corrupt civil institutions ; and when guarded by the sword of the law, they have liberally repaid the support which they have received, by employing in their turn the terrors and artifices of superstition to humble the minds of men. True religion can be the minister of nothing but good. All its sanctions and motives are directed to this end. But false religion may be made an agent in the production of almost any sort of evil. It is of its very essence to misemploy and misdirect the sanctions which it holds forth. In proof of what has been said, it is not necessary to look back to the period, when a despotism the most odious and degrading was established over Europe under the name of the Church of Christ ; and when the pretended authority of our religion was made a shelter for rank and rotten iniquity. It is better to regard the more moderate evils of our own time, and to take examples, which if not quite so impressive, have a more practical bearing. In every country of Europe, there are without doubt many, who regard religion merely as a part of the political machinery of the state, and a powerful instrument in preserving and strengthening the existing distinctions of society ; who, on the one side, view its establishments as a means of power and patronage, and, on the other, as a source of rank and wealth. The style and temper in which the national religion is defended, often borrow their char-



acter from the kind of estimation in which it is held. There is a worldly, political, interested zeal shown in its defence, which betrays an origin very different from the spirit of Christianity. It is a zeal for their own profit, and not for the happiness of their fellow creatures, which engages men in its support. Its corruptions are strenuously defended. All examination and all improvement are angrily repelled. The work of reformation must not be begun; for if it be suffered to begin, who can tell where it will stop? Who can tell how many profitable and convenient evils will be removed, or how many habits and customs and indulgences, which are now tolerated, might be marked out for reprobation? In the defenders therefore of the established faith, in such writers for instance as Horsley, we often find a tone of authority, the insolence of artificial rank, and that gross and impudent unfairness, on which few men will venture, unless they know that there is a strong party ready to cheer them as victors, whatever may be their real success. If its defenders do not write altogether in the style of those controversialists of former days, who knew that the executioner was at hand to give them aid; they nevertheless write like men, who feel that they have the power of the state on their side, and who are far more solicitous to maintain than to justify what is established. In such a state of things, true and useful learning ceases in a great measure to be cultivated by the clergy. Those of them who make their creed a matter of conscience, often find it safest not to examine too curiously the history or the doctrines of the faith which they are required to profess. Their creed presents itself to them on every side as a check to all liberal inquiry in the studies peculiar to their station. Nor is much inquiry found necessary; for their church with its established institutions, forms and doctrines, relies for support on a power, which affords it a very different sort of aid, from what the learning and talents of its ministers might furnish. But a deficiency of learning and talents is often far from being the worst characteristic of the clergy of such an establishment. When, as is commonly the case, its offices are considered principally as means of affording patronage, or of securing rank and emolument, men who possess very different qualifications from those necessary in their proper discharge, will be most successful in obtaining them. A large proportion of the professed ministers of religion will then be found not merely ignorant and inert, but destitute of religious principles and feelings, without belief, it may be, in any faith, worthless and profligate. In the character of a great part of the French clergy during the last century, when the highest offices of the church were filled by the nominations of the atheist Regent,

Duke of Orleans, and of the brutal debauchee, Louis XV. we may perceive an example of what has been stated. In the contempt and utter discredit which such clergymen must have cast upon religion, the great principle that holds human passions in restraint, and unites man to man, we may perceive a cause which alone is almost sufficient to account for the awful disruption of society that followed. But long before the evils of a corrupt establishment have become so glaring, it is easy to perceive its effects upon the minds of the laity. Their respect for religion, when not merely assumed as a matter of policy, becomes in a great part ceremonious, exterior and worldly, the respect of those who mistake what is in fact nothing more than mere vulgar pride in the dignity of their church, for something corresponding to religious sentiment and principle. It is a respect for a particular form of faith and worship, produced very much by its associations with antiquity, and solemn buildings, and imposing ceremonies, and high rank, and the power of the state. Nay, where ignorance and superstition gain complete establishment, as in Spain, all regard for religion may degenerate at last into mere bigotry to a name, accompanied with the mechanical and perfectly unmeaning observance of appointed ceremonies.

Among an ignorant and superstitious people, there may be a certain traditionary and exterior respect, and even zeal for their religion, while the ministers of that religion are regarded with dislike and contempt. "With all this attachment to forms and ceremonies," says an enlightened traveller, speaking of the religion of Spain, "it might naturally be expected that the clergy would be looked upon as objects of veneration; but as far as I can judge, this is by no means the case. The language held towards the ministers of religion is not always respectful, and is sometimes scurrilous.\*" This singular phenomenon exists, in a greater or less degree, in other parts of Europe. But it cannot exist long, where any considerable degree of intellectual improvement prevails. As soon as the mind ceases to be the mere slave of habits and prejudices, on which reason has never acted, one of its first rude operations will be to transfer those sentiments, with which it has regarded the ministers of religion, to religion itself, and to associate them with it. Respect for religion can hardly exist in an enlightened community, separate from respect for its ministers. In some parts of our own country, it is a truth not to be concealed, that the clergy have lost a portion of that estimation in which they have been, and in which it is most desirable that they should be held. Where this has taken place, the

\*Jacob's Travels in the South of Spain, p. 93.



fact is to be ascribed, I believe, partly to the nature of the doctrines which they have maintained, so abhorrent, in many cases, to the reason and common feelings of men, and so discordant with the present state of knowledge and intellectual improvement ; and partly, though I say it with extreme reluctance, to the traits of character, which a belief of these doctrines is adapted to produce. The fact itself, has been strikingly exemplified in a neighbouring state ; and it is, I think, very apparent, that some of the principal, if not the sole causes of it were those which have been stated. So operative indeed have been those causes, that a demand for greater religious toleration was found a very effective means of advancing to power the party which now prevails. In some of our commonwealths, there has been manifested a disregard, amounting to enmity, of the comfort, the respectability, and even the rights of the clergy. The rulers of the day have done what was in their power, by their constitutions and laws, to desecrate and unchristianize the state. They seem to have unlearned in some new empirical philosophy, the truth, which forty centuries have been teaching, that religious principle is the necessary support of government. If one were disposed to melancholy anticipations respecting our country, I do not know where he might look for a more alarming prognostic of evil, than to the disinclination which has been manifested to make suitable provision for the constant religious instruction of the people. But this error, originating, partly, at least, in temporary and accidental causes, such as have been stated, will, we may hope, be hereafter corrected. It has been justified only by a rash and extravagant application to practice of certain abstract, speculative principles, the nature of which has been very rudely apprehended, and their necessary limitations and conditions very imperfectly understood. Corrupt religious establishments have undoubtedly been connected with bad governments ; but it does not follow from this, that every government must not rest for support upon religion well or ill understood. To every government, this support is in fact necessary ; human society itself has no other basis ; and every government ought therefore, if from no higher and holier motive, to make provision that religion shall be taught in the best manner possible. If the religious errors which have prevailed, have contributed directly or indirectly, to prevent the accomplishment of this object, it may be reckoned as among their most melancholy consequences. But I turn to consider the subject before me, in still a different view.

When the religion publicly taught is of such a character, that reason turns away from it, and refuses to acknowledge its authority, it can have but a weak hold on the minds of the more intelli-

gent, and exercise but little influence upon their habitual affections and daily conduct. But there is a spurious sort of religion of the imagination and of temporary sentiment, which sometimes supplies the place of the religion of the understanding. Some of the infidel writers of Germany are willing to admire Christianity as a beautiful fable. There is such desolation and heartlessness in utter skepticism, that we are ready to turn from it even to a shadowy, unsubstantial image of the truth. The resemblance may indeed be preferred to the reality ; for if it has far less of joy and hope, it is also far less solemn and awful and authoritative. Where real living religion does not exercise its permanent, unremitting influence, we may often find in its stead a poetical, theatrical, mystical religion, which may furnish themes for the expression of fine sentiment, and the indulgence of transient emotion ; which delights to talk about sacrifices, but forgets duties, and has nothing to do with the unnoticed patience of obscure suffering, the unpraised self-denials of humble goodness, the strong and silent feelings of habitual piety ; or indeed with any virtues, but what are splendid and popular and fit for exhibition. It is such a religion which the authoress of *Delphine* has celebrated with her passionate and enthusiastic eloquence. It is this religion which the writer of the *Philosophical Dictionary*, not to mention any work more infamous, could introduce into his tragedies ; and it is for such a religion that Moore and Byron may compose sacred songs. Nobody, I trust, will so far misunderstand me, as to suppose it my intention to deny, that the sentiments expressed by such writers are sometimes very beautiful and correct. I only mean, that there is a religion, not of the understanding, and not of the heart, which terminates in the expression of fine sentiments.

Such then, as I have described, and so great, are the evils which result from false notions of religion. They can be removed only by establishing the truth ; and to this end, the truth must be earnestly avowed and defended, with a deep-felt conviction of its value to mankind. It is indeed an unpleasant thing to encounter prejudices, however mischievous, when among those who hold them, there are many very estimable for their virtues, who consider our professions as insincere, and our labours as profane ; and who therefore regard us with much harsher feelings of dislike, than common collisions of opinion are apt to produce. But allowing this to be as great an evil as you will, it must still be weighed against those evils which it is your purpose to remove ; and it is but dust in the balance. There is no way in which the truth can be made to prevail, except by the direct avowal of it, by the forcible and full statement of the arguments by which it is



supported ; and by a close encounter with opposite errors. Except the truth be clearly stated and defended, it is not easy to see how it can be made to prevail on any disputed subject ; but there is certainly no other way, in which you can hope to remove prejudices, so widely spread, and so obstinately maintained, as those respecting religion. Yet this encounter of truth with error, is religious controversy, of the ill consequences of which we sometimes hear so much, both from those who are entitled to high respect, as well as from those who are not. But it is a fact, though one not generally recognized, that in many cases, the manly, well-tempered, steady avowal of the truth, tends far more to repress, than to excite, the bitter and angry passions of our opponents. Look at the great change in the style of attack and controversy, as directed against Unitarian Christians, in our own country, which has been produced during the past year or two, almost by this cause alone. It has its effect upon all honest and fair minds ; for the tones of deep earnestness, and strong conviction, can hardly be mistaken or misrepresented. It has its effect upon minds of a different character ; for where there is no great superiority of vantage ground, reproach and insult are found in time to be but poor weapons against that sword, with which truth is furnished 'from the armoury of God.'

The real practical opinions of wise and virtuous men of different sects correspond, without doubt, much more nearly than their creeds. But as to the principal of these creeds, which determine, in a greater or less degree, the faith of the generality, it is idle to turn away our eyes, and endeavour to keep out of sight their direct opposition to each other, in regard to doctrines the most momentous. Between the extremes of truth and error, we may find also every grade of professed belief, in proportion as men have examined, more or less thoroughly, and with more or less honest freedom. But while these various, wide and most important differences exist in the professed faith of Christians, the minds of many will be confounded and lost in the search after truth, if those who are able do not step forward to assist and guide their inquiries. It is very desirable that men should give up their old errors ; for these errors have been exceedingly pernicious ; but there is danger lest he, whose faith has rested principally upon authority, and who has learnt to doubt and dismiss one doctrine after another, should begin to distrust the whole system of religion. There is danger that he will be unable to distinguish for himself between its essential truths, and those errors of human origin, which have been so blended with it ; and that in rejecting the latter, he will at the same time lose his reverence for the former. In order to prevent this consequence, it is

necessary for the defenders of real religion to separate, and to distinguish most clearly, those truths from these errors ; to draw a broad and deep line of demarcation between them, and to render evident the essential opposition in their character and effects. It is necessary for them to make it felt, to place it out of dispute, that it is not any childish and petulant love of innovation, nor any contemptible desire of attracting notice by assailing men's prejudices, but that it is their interest in true religion, their conviction of the value of Christianity, and their desire of promoting its influence, which are their motives in opposing doctrines, by which, as they think, its value has been obscured, and its influence obstructed. They must show what they maintain, and why they maintain it, what they oppose, and why they oppose it. They must explain themselves, prudently and wisely as they may, but very earnestly and explicitly.

There is, beyond doubt, great reason to rejoice in what has been already effected toward vindicating the true character of Christianity. But even in those communities, such as our own, where it is best understood, much, very much, remains to be done, before correct notions of religion can be fully developed, and exhibited in all their relations and bearings, and before our religion can be distinctly recognized, and received by men in all its purity, and divinity, and power. Old errors meet and embarrass us on every side. One false doctrine retreats upon another for support. There are many difficulties to be removed ; many inquiries to be answered ; and many honest doubts to be solved, which have their origin not in the nature of things, but in long established prejudices. The light is as yet mixed and cloudy. The truth itself, in many minds, rests upon a foundation not perfectly secure, and requiring to be strengthened. There are many ready to believe it, and who do believe it, but whose faith requires to be enlightened and confirmed. There are many, whose opinions, though prevailingly correct, are, in a considerable degree, undefined, hesitating and inconsistent. There are others still in a state of painful uncertainty. Under these circumstances, there is a call for instruction and guidance, which those who are able to afford them, are not at liberty to decline answering. Our fellow christians are in need of such knowledge, as may enable them to attain distinct and full conceptions of religion, and to embrace it with a satisfied mind and earnest faith. If it be in our power to dispense the bread of instruction and life, it will surely be our guilt, if we suffer them to complain, that they ' look up and are not fed.' But in communicating this knowledge, there is not a step we can advance, without encountering one prejudice or another. There is nothing we can teach,



which will not be contradicted. There is nothing we can propose, which will not be cavilled at. There is no information we can communicate, which will not be disputed. Every plan, apparently the most unexceptionable, for advancing religious knowledge will meet with opposition, for as this knowledge advances, some favourite error must fall before it. Let us consider one example. For the last century, there have been reiterated and strong complaints of the imperfection, errors, and obscurity, of the common English version of the Bible. There is a series of authorities to this purpose, collected by Archbishop Newcome,\* no mean authority himself. They are taken from writers of different communions and belief, some of them of the first eminence as critics, and theologians, and all of them more or less distinguished. To those whom he has quoted, many more of a similar character might easily be added ; and it may be doubted, whether there is a name of any weight, to be placed in the opposite scale. In England, there has been a call from within the church, and from without, for what Bishop Lowth has spoken of as "that NECESSARY work, a new translation, or a revision of the present translation of the Holy Scriptures," by public authority. And how much has been effected in consequence ? Every body knows what answer must be made—Nothing. The jealousy of all change has stood in the way of all improvement. Those who have felt that they, personally, might hazard something, and could gain nothing by any alteration, seem to have cared little, whether religion might gain any thing or not. Even in our country, where it is unsupported by public authority, the version of King James' translators, erroneous as it is, and in considerable portions of it, scarcely intelligible, has attained the same reputation and currency as in England. It is the only version in common use, the only one distributed by our Bible Societies, the only one read in our pulpits ; and till within a few years, no other version of any part of the Scriptures could have been readily procured in our country. It seems to be forgotten by many, that it is merely a faulty translation, and to be regarded with the same reverence, as if it were the very original of the holy writings. True zeal for the Scriptures would make us earnest indeed to furnish the best, the very best, means of understanding them correctly and fully. Nobody can well doubt, that this would be its natural operation. But there is a pretended zeal for the Scriptures, which has shown itself in a quite different manner ; and has opposed

\*In his work entitled "An Historical View of the English Biblical Translations : the expediency of revising, by authority, our present Translation : and the means of executing such a revision."

directly or indirectly every effort for the purpose. It is but one instance out of many, of the resistance, which all attempts to communicate religious knowledge have met with, and will meet with hereafter. Nothing can be effected without a struggle and a contest ; and he who has a philosophical or an epicurean dislike to controversy, who is fearful lest it should mar his temper, or put his dignity to hazard, or endanger his reputation, or disturb his quiet, may assure himself, that he is not such an instrument as is required in the work of enlightening and reforming his fellow men. The Sybarites might as well have been called in to assist in establishing the fortunes of the Eternal City.

But there are those, whom it is not to be wished should engage in the attempt to purify our religion. There are men, intemperate, imprudent, distinguished by their levity of judgment, ready to believe, that the further they remove from established opinions, the more they show themselves free from vulgar prejudices, fond of paradoxes, valuing opinions by their novelty and not by their correctness, taking pleasure in presenting even the truth in a form the most offensive to their opponents, unable to recognize the different appearances which the same essential belief may assume, according to the various characters of different minds, understanding little, and valuing less, the judgment and toleration with which the soundest principles are sometimes to be avowed, and having for their principal object to gain a worthless sort of notoriety, on the ground of being original thinkers, when this notoriety can be gained without loss or hazard. They commonly agree with the defenders of true religion, if they agree at all, only in attacking certain errors, and not in maintaining the great truths of our faith. But the latter is the main object, ever to be kept in view ; and those errors are to be controverted, because they are inconsistent with these truths. Such auxiliaries are more to be feared than any opponents. They resemble the predatory bands which sometimes accompany the march of an army, exciting ill-will and dread in a friendly country, and of no use in that of an enemy. Happily the defenders of the truth among us, have hitherto had little reason to complain of such assistance.

There is, it may be believed, a Reformation of religion now taking place of not less importance, than that to which the name has been so long appropriated. The purposes of God, in giving Christianity to men, have not yet been fully developed. Without doubt, its truths, notwithstanding the mass of errors with which they have been encumbered, have been continually operating to raise the character, and improve the condition of man. But, I trust, the providence of God. in conferring this great



blessing upon our race, looked far forward, to ages much beyond our own. There are even now indications of a period, when the truths, and even the evidences of our religion, shall be much better understood than at present. But it is strange, it may be said, that a revelation from God, should have been so long mingled with so much human error. You think it strange then, that he did not, by one vast miracle, annihilate in a moment, all those errors respecting religion and duty, which for thousands of years had been accumulating in the world ; that he did not sweep away at once, all prejudices from the minds of men, so that his truth might find unresisted entrance, and hold undisputed authority ; and that he did not afterward, by a perpetual act of his power, so strengthen their understandings, and so restrain their passions and follies, that no false opinions should, in any time to come, be ever introduced and maintained. Examine the history of opinions, and you will find that errors, either in religion or philosophy, which have once generally prevailed, are very slowly removed and superseded. Common modes of conception, and the popular belief, are transmitted from one generation to another, like the traditionary customs of the east. However unreasonable they may be, it is, for the most part, only by a very gradual process, that they are modified and corrected. The men of one generation are the instructors of the next. Coming ignorant into the world, we are compelled first to receive what our predecessors may teach us ; to believe, under the direction of others, before we can exercise our own judgment ; and when our instructors have been in error, it takes us a long time to discover the fact, and there are few who are able to discover it at all. The world is slow and dull in unlearning its prejudices. False doctrines which sprang up long before the introduction of Christianity, subsequently became connected with it, shooting their branches among its truths, and twining close around them, so as almost to conceal them from view, with their rank and poisonous luxuriance. The same false doctrines still remain flourishing. In opposing the errors of Christians, we are in fact often opposing only the errors of heathen philosophy, a little disguised, and somewhat modified, by time and circumstances. That so much error should have been incorporated with Christianity, or rather, that Christians should have fallen into so many errors on the subject of religion, for that is the true mode of stating the fact, does not seem very difficult to be accounted for, when we consider how much there is in the intellectual, and still more in the moral imperfections of man, which may lead him to embrace readily, false conceptions of his highest relations and duties ; when we acquaint ourselves with the erroneous doctrines in phi-

losophy, religion and morals, which prevailed throughout the civilized world, when our religion was introduced ; and when we further have a distinct conception of the fact just stated ; how very slow and reluctant are the changes, which take place in the speculative opinions of large bodies of men, even under the operation of the most powerful causes. That men should retain their errors in opposition to the clearest discoveries of revelation, was not more wonderful eighteen centuries ago, than it is at the present day. It is not more wonderful, than that they should retain them in opposition to the clearest discoveries of reason.

The dark ages were the triumph and consummation of the errors and vices, which were in the world when Christianity was introduced. Our religion struggled against them and delayed their progress ; and our religion at last delivered men from the slavery in which they were enthralled. It is to the spirit of Christianity, that the regeneration of Europe is to be ascribed. There were men, who if they had but imperfect notions of the real character of God's revelation, yet felt the power of some of its truths ; and these were the men who made successful resistance to the evils by which the world was oppressed. Without that elevation and energy of mind which the belief of immortality inspires, without those motives which Christianity alone affords, without that strong feeling of right and wrong which christian morals alone produce, and without that spirit of self-devotion which is the spirit of our religion, I know not how the deliverance of mankind from the reign of darkness could have been effected. I know not what better hope there would have been for Europe, than there is now for Turkey ; or why it might not have continued to lie in the same state of degradation, moral and intellectual, in which almost all Asia has lain for at least two thousand years. Since its commencement, the work of improvement has been continually carried forward ; and we now breathe a free air, and enjoy a blessed light, such as were never known before. But the work of improvement has been an arduous and severe struggle, a bitter conflict. The errors of men on the most important subjects have been in strict alliance with their pride, their passions, their interest and their vices ; and they have altogether maintained their ground with determined perseverance. Our religious and moral improvement has been purchased by severe thought and laborious investigation, by high-minded sacrifices of worldly hopes, by a generous contempt of reproach and persecution, by tears and blood. Wise men have spent themselves in painful and thankless labors, and holy men have suffered and died to procure for us the privileges which we enjoy. In tracing the melancholy history of our race, it is to such characters that



we must turn for consolation. They give us pledges, on which we may rely of the worth of man. They have followed the track of pure splendor, in which their great master ascended to heaven. They have carried on the grand scheme of moral reformation which he began, against similar opposition to what he encountered. They have continued the work of glory and suffering, which he committed to his apostles. They have purchased ingratitude at the same price, which saints and philosophers had paid before. It is delightful to remember, that there have been men, who, in the cause of truth and virtue, have made no compromises for their own advantage or safety; who have recognized 'the hardest duty as the highest;' who, conscious of the possession of great talents, have relinquished all the praise that was within their grasp, all the applause, which they might have so liberally received, if they had not thrown themselves in opposition to the errors and vices of their fellow men, and have been content to take obloquy and insult instead; who have approached to lay on the altar of God 'their last infirmity.' They, without doubt, have felt that deep conviction of having acted right, which supported the martyred philosopher of Athens, when he asked "What disgrace is it to me, if others are unable to judge of me, or to treat me as they ought?"\* There is something very solemn and sublime in the feeling, produced by considering, how differently these men have been estimated by their contemporaries, from the manner in which they are regarded by God. We perceive the appeal which lies from the ignorance, the folly, and the iniquity of man, to the throne of Eternal Justice. A storm of calumny and reviling has too often pursued them through life, and continued, when they could no longer feel it, to beat upon their graves. But it is no matter. They had gone where all who have suffered, and all who have triumphed, in the same noble cause, receive their reward; but where the wreath of the martyr is more glorious than that of the conqueror.†

\* — εμοι δε τι αισχυον το ετις ους μη δυνασθαι πρὸς εμου τα δικαία μὴτε γινῶναι, μὴτε ποιῆσαι.

† Such examples Milton delighted to contemplate and follow; and it was the contemplation of such human examples, which produced the inspiration of the following passage.

Servant of God, well done; well hast thou fought  
The better fight, who single hast maintained  
Against revolted multitudes the cause  
Of truth: \* \* \* \* \*  
And for the testimony of truth hast borne  
Universal reproach, far worse to bear  
Than violence; for this was all thy care,  
To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds  
Judged thee perverse.

There is no sufficient support for good morals ; there is no security for the common blessings of civilized life ; there is no power adequate to raise the condition of man, and to remove the vices and miseries which press so heavily upon human society, except correct religious principle. By comparing our own condition with the condition of those who have preceded us, we may perceive that it has already effected not a little. But more than we can calculate remains to be done ; and there is much, which, through the blessing of God, we may hope will hereafter be accomplished. We seem indeed to be gathering but the first unripe fruits, and enjoying but a little foretaste of the rich abundance which is promised. There have been times of ignorance and infamous imposture, of violence and triumphant iniquity, when it was no small praise for those who were contending in the cause of human improvement, that they had not despaired of mankind ; *quod non desperassent de rebus humanis*. They, like the Trojan hero, have asked for no omen, but that one best omen,—*Εἰς αἰῶνος ἀγῆστος*,—the cause in which they were engaged. But we are living in a different state of things. There are, without doubt, those, to whom all extended regard for the happiness and improvement of their fellow-men, seems an idle and visionary thing. It is lamentable that it should be so ; and it is a lamentable mistake, if any one, feeling this indifference, supposes, at the same time, that he has the spirit of that religion whose founder “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” But there is a living spring of virtue and happiness, whose waters have as yet been not a little choked up, and its channels not a little obstructed. There is a purifying and animating principle, whose influences have as yet been very partially felt. It is true, rational, practical religion. Has this no tendency, and no power, to produce those effects, which every good and every wise man must desire so ardently ? Even if experience had not long ago answered the question, still there could be no doubt what answer must be given. But we are every day witnessing its effects upon the characters of those around us. Some men, it is true, in their zeal for supporting a system, or in their unwillingness to acknowledge the existence of virtues which they do not possess, have uttered calumnies against our nature, and against God who gave us our nature. But he must have suffered through some singular misfortune, or some singular fault, who has advanced far in life, without witnessing and experiencing much disinterested kindness, much public spirit, much generous exertion, much moral purity, and much conscientious integrity. Imperfect as the best of men may be, there are in every link of life those, to whom,



if all were like, the world would present a wonderfully different aspect from what it does at present. How have the characters of such men been formed? How is it that those whom we can most trust, esteem and love, have become what they are? The general answer is, that their characters have been formed under the influence of religious principle, by the continual action of those great practical truths which religion enforces. They may be of different sects; they may profess different creeds; they may even fancy that they are wide asunder from each other; but they are not. Their *practical* religion is the same. There is but one kind of practical religion in the world. It consists of those great, all-important truths, which wise and good men hold in common. It is to these truths, that we wish to give their full unimpeded efficacy. It is these truths, which we wish to bring into action, unembarrassed and unopposed by the errors that have been connected with them. It is for these truths, which have been the master principles in forming the characters of the most excellent of men, that we wish to procure more general reception; and it is for these truths, that we would vindicate their peculiar and preeminent authority. All our hopes for the welfare of man are identified with our hopes for the prevalence of true religion. And this is opposed, and has been opposed but too effectually, by those false doctrines; for which so many are yet earnestly contending. They are among the chief causes, counteracting that one great cause, to which we must look almost alone for the effective production of good. The rational and enlightened Christian, when he finds men zealously and pertinaciously defending errors, which grossly misrepresent our religion, and expose it to disbelief and contempt, will be ready to use language, like that which Tertullian addressed to the heretics of his time, *Parce spei unicæ mundi*—‘Spare the only hope of mankind.’

In our endeavors to promote the influence of rational religion, what are the obstacles which present themselves? They are, in the first place, prescriptive errors and traditionary prejudices. But these are every day losing their strength. There are others indeed beside these. There are those principles in man, those selfish and vile passions, by which every effort of the moralist and philosopher, no matter from what direction it may proceed, is equally opposed. They present, therefore, no peculiar discouragement in the present case. Are the truths for which we contend, intrinsically difficult to be understood? The answer has been given by an apostle: *The doctrine is nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the doctrine of faith which we are preaching.* The answer has been given by a prophet: *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord.*

*require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* The prospect which true religion opens to the mind, displays a beautiful and solemn grandeur, to which that of the visible heavens forms but a faint comparison ; but it is with one as with the other ; we need not travel far, nor search for our point of view, in order to behold all that is given us to see of the moral or of the physical universe. Is it impossible to render the practical operation of these truths, more general and effective ? Is it impossible, when religion joins her voice, to that which experience has been so long uttering, to make men believe and feel, at last, that their duty and their interest are the same ; that the laws of God are but directions which he has given us in his infinite wisdom and mercy, for attaining our highest happiness ; that it is better to be just and benevolent, honored and beloved, than to be selfish, unjust, and cruel, despised, distrusted, and hated ; that it is unwise to sacrifice a great future good to a present indulgence, which leaves behind it dissatisfaction and repentance ; and that he who submits the moral part of his nature to the animal, is degrading himself, and destroying his best capacities for enjoyment ? Is it impossible that the generality of men in a Christian land should be brought to act, as if they really believed these truths, and truths such as these ? Whether it be so or not, yet remains to be determined. The experiment has never been made. These principles have, indeed, governed the lives of many. They are familiar to the moralist, the philosopher, and the well educated man. The whole revelation of Jesus Christ was intended to enforce these truths. But they have not been enforced, nor have they been taught in the popular systems of religion. These systems have made a wide separation between real virtue, and what they have taught men to consider as the characteristics of a Christian. Do you believe that the religion of Spain or Italy, has had an effect to elevate and purify the morals and the minds of the inhabitants of those countries, at all corresponding to the effect which true Christianity would have produced ? Do you receive our faith in its purity ; and can you believe that the doctrines of Calvin have had much tendency to develope the higher powers and better affections of man ? Do you believe that they have flourished under such culture ; and that those doctrines have really operated very efficaciously in producing reverence, love, and gratitude toward Him, who has formed us under his curse ; and active and warm-hearted benevolence toward the thoroughly depraved, and inexpressibly odious beings, our fellow men ? The tendency of every prevalent system of false religion, has been to call away the attention of men from the practice of moral goodness, and to direct it to some other object. All such



systems have presented some substitute for what true religion requires. They have misapplied the sanctions of Christianity, diverting them from their great purpose. They have provided some hiding place and shelter for the baser passions; and these, in return, have often been most zealous in their defence. This is the great characteristic distinction between true religion and false; that the former directs all its motives and sanctions to the production of real moral excellence; and that the latter sets up something else as the object of its requisitions and promises. The belief of a creed, the belonging to a particular sect, zeal for the church, zeal for orthodoxy, even a readiness to engage in the work of persecution, the self-infliction of bodily torture, the practice of useless austerities, the endurance of useless privations, absolutions purchased with money from a miserable fellow-sinner, reliance upon substituted merit, a fancied miraculous change of character, the being elected to salvation by an arbitrary and irreversible decree, these, and other similar distinctions, and means, have all been sanctioned, or countenanced, by different modes of false religion among Christians, as pledges of the favor of God, and passports to eternal happiness. Amid the triumph of these different errors, true moral excellence, the one, and the only thing needful, has been regarded with about as much favor, as a deposed monarch might expect from usurpers, who had seized upon, and divided his kingdom. Make yourself acquainted with the true characters of many of those, with whom one or another system of false religion, has peopled heaven, and consider whether it be desirable that the number of such men should be multiplied upon earth? Are we to expect any thing very much resembling the influence of true religion, from systems, which hold up so false a standard of moral excellence? If we are not, the experiment is yet to be made, which shall determine what that influence may be.

It is the indissoluble union between the religious opinions of men and their moral characters, which renders the former, a subject of so much importance and interest. The controversies which exist respecting religious doctrines, are not, as some seem to believe, mere disputes among theologians, about speculative opinions and scholastic subtilties; they are a contest between truth and error, upon subjects of a practical importance that cannot be estimated. They concern opinions, which lie at the very foundation of our hopes, our principles, our affections, our whole characters; and which, as they are true or false, useful or pernicious, communicate their complexion and features to the whole aspect of society. They are controversies between truth and error, respecting essential doctrines in the highest de-

partment of human knowledge. The present state of things is the result of the march of intellectual improvement, which advancing rapidly elsewhere, has been stopped, and thrown back, and broken, by the prejudices that have entrenched themselves on religious ground. No one interested in the well-being of his fellow men, is privileged to stand aloof, and look on with indifference. There is a moral obligation upon every man, similar to that law which bound the citizens of Athens in their civil divisions, to take part with one side or the other. Those theologians who are engaged in defending the truth, are engaged in maintaining the great cause of intellectual improvement, of good morals, of civil and religious freedom, of rational piety, of human happiness,—of mankind. They have a right to expect the aid of all who are interested in the same objects. They have a right to expect, that those who are employed in other intellectual pursuits, and other efforts to benefit their fellow men, will not so separate and disconnect themselves, as they have sometimes done, through misapprehension of the importance of the controversy, and through disgust at the style of reasoning, and modes of attack which they must have to encounter. Are you interested in advancing human knowledge, and can you think it a matter of indifference, whether men hold the grossest errors or the sublimest truths, concerning the very highest objects of speculation? You can hardly help feeling some degree of indignation and contempt, toward those who condemned Galileo to the prisons of the Inquisition, for teaching the motion of the earth; or toward the men, who calumniated and persecuted Harvey, because he made known the circulation of the blood. You respect the good sense and courage of those, by whom these truths were first maintained, in opposition to surrounding ignorance and prejudice. But nobody will think it too much to say, that these truths are not to be compared in importance, with those which relate to the nature, character, and moral government of God; and to the condition, duty, and destination of man. You are desirous of diffusing the blessings of instruction through the community, of carrying knowledge and light to the poor man's dwelling. Is there any knowledge which will be of such value to him as the knowledge of his duty and his hopes; as that knowledge which will make him a good citizen, which will reconcile him to his situation, and which may, at the same time, raise him to an essential equality with the most favoured of mankind? You are interested, generally, in the well-being of your fellow-men; you are ready to afford your aid to those who would lessen the amount of abuses and evils, of crimes and miseries, which prey upon society; you admire the intense energy of mo-



ral feeling which carried Howard, as a minister of good, wherever human wretchedness was to be found ; you know how to estimate the patient, untired, unyielding efforts of those who have almost succeeded in relieving the civilized world from the curse and the infamy of the slave-trade ; you at least give your good wishes to those who would save mankind from the guilt and the horrors of war ; you are interested in every plan of enlightened benevolence ;—is it possible then, that you can be uninterested in asserting the character of those truths, and giving efficacy to those principles, which are the support and strength of all the social virtues ; and without the belief of which, true, self-denying, persevering benevolence would find no dwelling place upon earth ? The belief of these truths has formed the characters of that class of men in society, on whom the good order and happiness of the community depends, and from whom alone you can look for safe auxiliaries, in all endeavors to reform the evils which are in the world, and improve the human condition. This belief alone can give birth to that disinterested love of virtue, and of mankind, which pursues its object through good report, and through evil report, through opposition and danger and suffering ; and has pursued it even into the arms of death. It is this belief which creates the well disposed citizen, the real patriot, and the enlightened and practical philosopher. If you doubt the value and efficacy of true religion, look to experience, and look to human nature. If you do not doubt it, can you fail to give your aid to those who would vindicate its character and extend its influence ?

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UNITARIAN EXPOSITOR—No. 4.

WE endeavoured to show in our last number, that there is no plausible pretence of scriptural evidence for the existence of any being distinct from God the Father, called the Holy Spirit. Unless however, the existence of such a being is proved, the doctrine of the trinity cannot be maintained, the former doctrine being an essential part of the latter. We might, therefore, as far as the belief in a trinity of persons is concerned, safely rest the discussion here, since in order to disprove the assumption that there are three equal persons, all that is necessary is to disprove the existence of one of the three. We will proceed however, at the risk of being thought to be engaged in a gratuitous labour, to the examination of certain texts which are supposed to prove that our Saviour is God ; and in the first place, of some in which the *name* God is understood to be applied to him.

An important remark is to be premised. It is, that supposing the *title* God to be given in scripture any number of times to our Saviour, this of itself would go very little way towards proving his Supreme Deity.—Why? Because this title is often given in scripture to beings allowed on all sides to be derived and dependent. As we should not be able to state the proof of this ourselves to equal advantage, we give it in an extract from Yates' answer to Wardlaw. "God" is not a Name, which belongs exclusively to the Supreme Being. The title is applied in the Sacred Scriptures, not to him alone, but to some of his creatures. In proof of this fact the Unitarians appeal to no less an authority than that of Jesus Christ himself, who affirms, that in the Scriptures, *those persons are called Gods, unto whom the word of God came.* John x. 35. If his testimony require, or admit of, any confirmation, it is afforded by the following passages; Gen. iii. 5. "Your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil." Ex. vii. 1. "And the LORD said unto Moses, 'See, I have made thee a GOD to Pharaoh.'" xv. 11. "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the GODS." xxi. 6. "Then his master shall bring him unto the *Judges*," literally, "unto the GODS." xxii. 8, 9. "If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the *Judges*, (literally, unto the GODS,) to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods: For all manner of trespasses, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the *Judges*; (literally, before the GODS) and whom the *Judges* (literally, the GODS) shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour." Ver. 28. "Thou shall not revile the GODS, nor curse the *ruler* of thy people." Deut. x. 17. "For the LORD, your God, is God of GODS." 1 Samuel ii. 25. "If one man sin against another, the *Judge* (literally, the GOD) shall judge him." xxviii. 13. "I saw *Gods* (properly, a GOD) ascending out of the earth." Ps. viii. 5. "For thou hast made him a little lower *than the Angels*," literally, "than the GODS." lxxxii. 1. "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the GODS." Ver. 6. "I have said, 'Ye are GODS.'" lxxxvi. 8. "Among the GODS there is none like unto thee, O LORD." xcvi. 7. "Worship him, all ye GODS." Ver. 9. "Thou, LORD, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted far above all GODS." Here are seventeen cases, (and I think it probable, that there are more) of the use of the word God in the sense, affixed to it by our Saviour. It is therefore undeniable, that the name may be given, according to the practice of the Sacred Writings, to all persons, whether Angels, Prophets, or Judges, *to whom the word of*



God comes, or, who are authorized, commissioned, and inspired to declare the will of God to mankind. In this sense all Unitarians admit and maintain, that Jesus Christ was a God. The mere application to him of this title consequently proves nothing. As a learned Unitarian author observes, "The question is not, whether Christ is called God in Scripture, for that is undeniable; but, *in what sense* the word is to be understood." (H. Taylor's Considerations on Ancient and Modern Creeds compared, p. 124.) The established principles of criticism require, that we should prefer that interpretation, which is agreeable to the clear and universally acknowledged doctrine of the Scriptures, before that, which is contrary to any known truth, or which is attended with any considerable difficulties. Since therefore it is a fact, about which there is among Christians no dispute, that Jesus was a person, "unto whom the word of God came;" since we know, that he vindicated the application to himself of the title God, taken in *this* sense (John x. 34, 35.) and since we do not know, until it be proved, that the title belongs to him in any *other* sense; we ought thus to understand it, wherever we find it applied to him in the Sacred Scriptures, *unless there be some particular circumstances in the mode of application*, which point him out as THE SUPREME GOD, THE ONE LIVING AND TRUE GOD, THE GOD OF GODS, OR THE GOD WHO IS ABOVE ALL."

The name God being given then to prophets, rulers, judges, and angels, it will be seen how little distance, considering the use of the scripture writers, it would go, toward proving the supreme deity of our Saviour, even were it often given him in scripture. It will appear from the remarks we shall next offer, how far this is to be allowed.

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#### RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

A FRIEND expresses in a note the satisfaction and improvement which have been derived from the following books; and adds the remarks subjoined.

Nelson's Practice of True Devotion. Fellows' Picture of Christian Philosophy. Porteus' Lectures on the Gospel of St. Matthew. Letters of Henry Kirk White. Mason on Self Knowledge. Hannah More's Practical Education. Scougal's Life of God in the Soul of Man. Merivale's Daily Devotions. Fellows' Guide to Immortality. Harwood's Introduction to the Study of the New Testament.

"Hannah More's Sacred Dramas are very useful to young persons, as they familiarize them with interesting portions of scripture history, and Ganganelli's Letters are excellent for those in more mature life. It is true that the former is a strict Trinitarian, and what would be more shocking to many, the latter was a Roman catholic. But I am of Mrs. Barbauld's opinion, who says "we may see much good in a doctrine to which we cannot give our assent; we may respect tendencies of a sect, the tenets of which we utterly disapprove."

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**ON PROVISION BY LAW FOR THE SUPPORT OF CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS.**

THE approaching Convention for the revision of the Constitution of Massachusetts, is an object of interest in no point of view more, than as regards the effect it may have on the religious institutions of the state. Our present Constitution makes provision, on the most large and liberal basis, for the support of Christian worship and teaching amongst the people; wisely considering, that the general safety and happiness could be in no way more certainly secured, than by insuring familiar acquaintance with religious truths. Under this system, the past and present generations have happily and virtuously lived, and various denominations of christians have flourished and increased. With this system however, many, for various reasons, are much dissatisfied, and efforts will be made, perhaps successfully, to expunge the present article on this subject from the Declaration of Rights. We cannot but feel that such an event would be unhappy, and injurious to the general cause of religion and of the state. We cannot enter at large into the subject, or attempt to state fully the grounds on which this opinion may be defended. But we beg the very serious attention of our readers to a few paragraphs, while we express our earnest hope, that our fellow citizens and fellow christians will not suffer themselves to be led, by the vague cry of toleration, liberality, and rights of conscience, or the still more vague dread of an unhallowed alliance between church and state, inconsiderately to abandon the provisions of our forefathers, under which we have so long prospered.

There is danger that the nature of the constitutional provisions may not be understood. There is nothing in them like an established church, or a form of natural faith and worship. All sects and opinions of protestant christians are alike protected. There is no alliance of church and state; no combination of an eccle-



siastical with a lay aristocracy for mutual support and defence. The church is as republican as the government itself. The people choose their own ministers, and they will be of such denomination as the majority of parishioners approve. There is no controul over the conscience; no proselyting spirit. The right of every individual to maintain his own opinions, and to worship his Creator in such form as his judgment may dictate, is secured. Let the article in question be examined, and it is impossible to find in it any thing, but a recognition of the great principle, that to the happiness and good order of every community, religion is most essential. The very fact, that the protection of the law is extended alike to all the sects, into which protestant christians are divided, gives the assurance that the power vested in the legislature, can never be abused for the purposes of political oppression. And what is this power? Simply to make provision for the support of public religious instruction by such teachers, as the majority may prefer. And is this an object, which any government, having in view the safety and happiness of the people, can properly neglect? But it may be said, the very nature of religion forbids the interference of the civil arm. Our Saviour said, "my kingdom is not of this world"—and his disciples violate the spirit of his religion, if they attempt to promote it by the aid of temporal power. Let it be remembered, that the Constitution confines itself to providing, that there shall be instruction in the principles of religion and morality; it compels no one to hear doctrines, or to join in a mode of worship, which his conscience condemns; it assumes no authority over the belief; it selects no creed as the orthodox faith. It trusts the cause of religion to the fair influence of reason and truth over the mind, without presuming to enforce their instructions by any legal enactments. What it requires, is only, that throughout the Commonwealth, there be schools for teaching those great and all-important truths, which can never cease to be taught without involving the downfall of good order, and good government; without even the corruption and overthrow of our free institutions, and the destruction of the spirit of liberty. What, we would ask, but the christian religion, has given rise to the liberal and enlightened views of the mutual rights and relations of men, now prevailing in the greater part of the civilized world? What else has gradually elevated the serf and bondsman till his claims as a man are acknowledged, and the class of slaves has disappeared from most of the nations of Europe? To what, but to the extension of Christian principles, which teach us to regard all men as brothers, and equal in the sight of God, can we ascribe the influence and power, which the middling and commercial classes

have acquired in all the governments, which originally were founded on the principles of feudal aristocracy? And when Christian instruction shall cease to be regarded as the most important good, which a government can provide for its people, what can we expect, but the decline of good morals, and the consequent return of ignorance and despotism?

It may be thought by some, that there is security enough in the attachment of the people to religion, and that we may rely on a voluntary provision. But those who reason thus, forget that this very attachment is the fruit of that legal provision for public instruction in religion, which from ancient times has existed among us.\* They forget, that it is because from their earliest years they have heard the lessons of piety inculcated from the pulpit, that the great mass of our population are decent in their observance of the Sabbath, and revere the institutions of Christianity. Let the legal support be removed, let it be once solemnly declared, that the people of Massachusetts no longer consider the Christian Religion, as the basis and support of their government, and who will undertake to foretell the consequences? But it is enough to say, that the power of compelling is only given, "in all cases, where such provision shall not be made voluntarily." If then the attachment to religious institutions be so strong, that provision would continue to be voluntarily made, through this article were expunged from the Bill of Rights, its continuance can assuredly do no harm; while to expunge it may be followed by the most alarming evils.

We would add a few words on the importance of conforming, so far as the present Constitution goes, the *government* of the country to the *religion* of the country. We profess to be Christians. We profess to receive the light of revelation as the greatest possible favor of the Deity. We profess to consider ourselves bound to carry its injunctions into all the duties of life. We hope to form our characters by it here, and to bear the stamp of that character forever. We profess to believe that Christianity should infuse its influence, its graces, and its authority into the actions of our lives, open and private, public and domestic. Further, we profess to believe it to be our individual duty to recommend Christianity by our example; to extend its influence and authority; to recommend it by shewing our sense of its importance, and to diffuse the knowledge of it over the whole world, as far and as fast as we are able, for the enlightening of the nations, and the salvation of men. Now, if we in truth feel the pressure of these high and solemn duties upon us as in-

\* See the Act of 1692—(Col. and Prov. Laws, p. 243,) which provides at once for the support of ministers and schoolmasters.



dividuals, how do we escape from their weight, in our social capacity, as members of the state? Is it not equally imperative upon us to endeavour for the infusion of the spirit of Christianity into the rule and conduct of our society? Is it more important, what the opinions, or what the example of individuals may be, than what the opinions and examples of the whole, as represented in the corporate society may be? Has government no duties to perform, which require a christian spirit, or a christian character? Has it no examples to set, which may do good or evil?—And while we are exerting ourselves, in common with other christian nations, to carry the blessings of the christian character over the world, should we signalize ourselves for consistency, and leave no room to question the sincerity of our professions, if we should declare, in the fundamental articles of our social compact, that we hold it to be not at all indispensable, that this Christianity should be the religion of our government; and that we hold ourselves excused even from giving it a decent preference over infidelity and atheism?

In this view, it must be regarded as matter of high importance, that we, as a Christian people, should insist upon having none but Christian rulers. And we cannot see that this defrauds any one of his *rights*. Strictly speaking, there can be no *right* to be elected into an office. Election to office, goes upon the opinion of the electors of the trustworthiness of the elected. It is altogether matter of trust, and confidence, and good opinion; and no man can claim, as matter of legal right, the confidence and good opinion of his neighbors. If then the electors may choose whom they please, and may do this on the score of such qualifications as they please to require, they may, if they see fit, make such qualifications general requisites, and may prescribe them beforehand, as essential to the subject of their choice. If two candidates were this day before the people, for the chief magistracy of the commonwealth, the one a christian, and the other an infidel, they would have an unquestionable right to elect the former, *because* he was a christian, and to reject the latter *because* he was an infidel. And they have the same right to say beforehand, and to make it a part of their constitution, that they will confine their choice of chief magistrate to such persons as are christians. There is no difference in the cases. If they can rightfully give this preference, in one case, they can as rightfully establish it as the rule for all cases. There is no injustice certainly in this. The only consideration is, whether it be expedient, upon the whole. And this depends upon the opinion which we form of the *importance* of the qualification. If the ground of distinction be frivolous, or entitled to little regard, it would be most unwise, in establishing a frame of government, to insist on

the distinction. But if, on the other hand, it be deemed highly important to the public interest, that a certain qualification should be possessed by all public men, then, clearly, it ought to be required. Is there, then, any thing which renders it *important*, that men, discharging public functions, in a Christian country, should be Christians? A question, we think, which we need not answer by an argument:—And yet to this question, does the whole discussion come at last. Some might answer, “yes, certainly; it is most important that the public men in a Christian country should be Christians; but as such would, always, or ordinarily be chosen, without any constitutional requirement, it is not important, that there should be such requirement. But this answer yields the right, without disproving the expediency of the measure. For if it be important that a given course of things should take place, it is always expedient to ensure that course of things, if it can be done with justice and convenience. The Constitution, as it at present stands, only gives a security for that, which almost every one, we presume, deems to be of itself desirable. It does this, without taking away any man’s right, or affecting any man’s conscience.

We must beg leave to add, that Christianity, whatever abuses have flowed from its corruptions, in its true state, is a religion of liberty. Toleration is a part of Christianity, even the toleration of its deadliest enemies. This is more than can be said of any other religion. The ancient pagans knew nothing of the practice of toleration—the modern pagans know as little. In giving to the state, therefore, the religion of Christianity, we not only give it a religion which we believe to be divine, and upon which, as individuals, we trust our own highest interest, but we give also a religion of toleration and charity.

But it is moreover, and especially to be remembered, that we are not now, for the first time, called on to insert this principle into the Constitution. We find it there. Men, whose love of liberty would suffer in no comparison with that of any in our days, have placed and left it there. It cannot, we think, be truly said, that any individual has suffered wrong from it. Nor have we the least question but that the great body politic has derived good from it. To strike out and expunge it now, would seem to us to be a sort of gratuitous disrespect to the Christian religion. It would seem to be going out of our way to manifest an indifference to religious character; a causeless, pains-taking effort to express our opinion, that the greatest concerns of civil life—all that government has any influence over, directly or indirectly—political freedom—personal security—property—character—education—morality, and even religion itself, are as well protected without as with, either the influence or the sanctions of Christianity.



**MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS.****RELIGION IN SPAIN.**

**T**HE readers of the Disciple will probably be interested by the following extracts from JACOB'S travels, respecting the state of religion in Spain.

"The subject of Religion is too important in this country to be slightly passed over. Its ceremonies, indeed, so frequently recur, expressions derived from it are so commonly used, and the habits of the people are so formed by it, that it merits the greatest attention. The feelings of religion are supported by every object that presents itself to the view: at the corners of most of the principal streets, the shrines of various saints obtrude themselves upon the passenger; even the fronts of many of the houses are adorned with their images, to which the pious stranger uncovers his head with humility, and silently expresses his devotion by making the sign of the cross.

"In the midst of the gaieties which commence about five o'clock in the evening, when the Paseo, or public walk, is crowded with company dressed in their most splendid attire, and indulging in the liveliest conversation, the sound of a bell announces the approaching hour of sunset. At this signal, which is called oracion, every one, as if by magic, seems fixed in his place; every head is uncovered, and the whole company repeats, or is supposed to repeat, a mental prayer: after a few minutes devoted to these formalities, the lively scene is resumed, and the conversation continued from the point at which it met this pious interruption. This ceremony takes place in every part of Spain; and where theatres or other public amusements are open, the sound of this bell suspends the entertainment till the prayer is over; so great is its effect, that it is even said that assassins, at the moment of executing their horrid design, have held their hand at the sound of the oracion, and, after repeating the habitual prayer, have perpetrated their diabolical purpose.

"I have reason to suspect that this practice, as well as some others, arises more from conformity to the usages of their country, than from any strong religious feelings, for I have observed in private houses, that the attention paid to this bell diminishes in proportion to the rank of the family: among the lower classes of people it is usual to kneel or stand up; among those of greater consequence they merely sit still and remain silent;

while those of the highest rank suffer the bell to toll unheard and unregarded.

"No one of the various religious observances, with which this city abounds, appears more ludicrous to me, or more solemn to the inhabitants, than the procession of the host to the houses of the sick, at the hour of approaching dissolution. A priest, seated in a sedan chair, with the holy elements in a gold case on his lap, escorted by a guard of soldiers, and preceded by a bellman, is literally denominated by the people 'His Majesty coming down the street.' To increase the singularity of the spectacle, the bellman strikes three strokes, in allusion to the three persons of the Trinity, and then ceases. At this well known sound, whatever be the state of the weather, or the condition of the streets, every one drops on his knees, and continues in this devout posture till the object of adoration is out of sight. If this procession should pass through a street, containing a theatre or a ball-room, the actors on the stage, and the dancers at the assembly, alike drop on their knees till the sound is lost, when they resume their thoughtless dissipation.

"There are nightly processions through the streets of this city, called the Rosario, one of which I mentioned having met, in a former letter, as I entered this place. The different wards conduct this procession by turns, so that it is every night parading in some part of the town; being more or less splendid, according to the revenues of the church or convent whence it proceeds. The Rosario is complimented by the inhabitants of the streets through which it passes, by illuminations, that have a splendid effect, but which is in a great measure counteracted by the horrid noise of the singers and chanters.

"The common forms of salutation, perhaps, partake no more of religion than those of other countries; and 'va ja usted con Dios,' is only equivalent to the French 'adieu,' or the English 'good bye;' but a mode of expression is adopted, much more striking and singular, on visiting any family; when you ring or knock, a servant within inquires, 'who calls?' and the person who wishes for admission exclaims, 'Ave Maria purissima,' to which those within, on opening the door, make response, 'Sin pecado concebida;' and as the first of these sentences cannot be uttered by the Devil, and the second will not be said by a heretic, there is no danger in the visit, when such orthodox formalities have been mutually exchanged. When our party has been introduced into a family, I have frequently heard the inquiry, made in a whisper, 'Are they Christians?' if the persons who introduced us, replied 'they are Protestants,' a sigh, with the exclamation 'que lastima' (what a pity), frequently escaped their lips.



"However decorous the Spaniards may be in the performance of their public devotions, nothing can be more indecent and slovenly than the manner in which their domestic worship is conducted; a circumstance which I have frequently noticed in the family with whom I lodge. Towards the conclusion of supper, when seated round the table, the master of the house commences with repeating ten Ave Maria's; the wife repeats the *Pater Noster* and her ten Ave Maria's, others at table repeat in the same manner, while one of them with a rosary of beads keeps the account, till they have repeated the Ave Maria fifty times, and the Lord's prayer five times, the number being accurately corrected by the string of beads. They then say a litany, adding to the name of every saint of a long list, '*ora pro nobis*;' then a prayer for the dead, another for protection during the night, and conclude the whole with a *Gloria Patri*. The words are uttered with as much rapidity as possible; and if any employment calls away the person who is repeating, he performs the work without interrupting the prayer, or losing any time; in fact, the Spaniards appear to act slowly and deliberately in every thing they undertake, except it be in this single instance of family worship.

"Under every strong emotion of mind, a Spaniard has recourse to religion, and naturally crosses himself, to calm the rage of passion, dispel the horrors of fear, and allay the feelings of surprise and astonishment. The solitude of a church-yard, the loneliness of a desert, and the darkness of night, are disarmed of their terrors by this magic sign, and even the exclamations of wonder, excited by English ships of war and English regiments (and nothing has excited more wonder) can only be silenced by using this never-failing and powerful charm.

"With all this attachment to forms and ceremonies, it might naturally be expected, that the clergy would be looked upon as objects of veneration; but, so far as I can judge, this is by no means the case. The language held towards the ministers of religion is not always respectful, and is sometimes scurrilous. A few days ago, the auxiliary bishop of this city made a tour round his diocese, for the purpose of confirmation; from every person confirmed, a small sum of money was required, which was either an increase of the customary fee, or a novel demand. On his return to the city with the money, he had thus collected, he was attacked by a banditti, who robbed him, not only of his extorted wealth, but also of all the clothes and vestments which he carried in his coach. The knowledge of the story excited the jokes and the merriment of the people, mixed with wishes that the clergy were the only victims of robbers. The character

and conduct of the friars is generally the object either of virulent reprobation, or ludicrous jocularity. They have lost the esteem of every one, and instead of being respected for their seclusion from the world, they are reproached by all classes for their indolence, their voluptuousness, and their profligacy; their dispersion is generally looked forward to with pleasing anticipation, as an event that must take place, if ever the people of Spain are assembled by their representatives the Cortes."

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"On Sunday I went to the Cathedral, to see the ceremony of high Mass. There is a pomp and splendour in the Catholic worship, when performed in a country where that religion is established, which, like any other pageant, dazzles for a moment, and confines the attention to the imposing spectacle; but it is so different from any of our feelings of religion, that the impression it makes upon us, differs little from that which the best scenes in a theatre produce. On those, however, who from early and repeated association have connected these ceremonies with religious ideas, and with the strong feelings of adoration and gratitude, the effect produced must be very great, though I should suspect very transient.

"I have frequently visited this Church before, and every time with such increased admiration, that I am afraid to attempt a description of it, from a consciousness of the difficulty to do justice to my own impressions. From the climate, it is necessary to exclude the heat, and of course the light; there are consequently but few windows, and those of painted glass, barely sufficient to give light enough to distinguish, on first entering, the various surrounding objects. This produces a solemn effect on the high altar, which is brilliantly illuminated with wax-tapers of an enormous size. The decorations of this altar are splendid and sumptuous beyond description; the quantity of gilding on the borders of the different compartments, filled with images and pictures, the massy silver and gold ornaments, and the rails of bronze, tastefully designed, compose a most impressive whole. The priests kneeling before the altar, and in silence offering up their devotions, the clouds of ascending incense, and the pious on their knees, in the most striking attitudes, altogether form a scene that at once captivates the imagination, and suspends the reasoning faculties; it is a scene to be felt but not described; the sensations it produces may be indulged, but cannot long delude a reflecting mind.

"My English ideas were not to be seduced by this imposing spectacle, and I could not refrain, after a few minutes, from calculating what portion of all that is valuable in man, of moral



rectitude, of benevolent propensity, and of patience in adversity, is produced by all this costly machinery. That some part of this machinery may be useful it would be unjust to doubt, and rash must that man be, who would hastily and inconsiderately level to the ground even these supports, feeble as they are, of the virtue and consolation of a whole people. The great distinction between the English Clergy and those of the Catholic Church, as well as some of our English sectaries, is, that the former, in all their public services, strive chiefly to enforce practical virtue, while the latter lay the greatest stress on the adherence to their peculiar rites and doctrines.

“Religion in every country is calculated to produce an effect on manners as well as on morals; in England, among those who read but little or not at all, the effect is accomplished by public preaching; but in Spain, where preaching is by no means common, the knowledge of Religion is kept alive by sensible representations of the events of the Gospel history. These are exhibited in the Churches, or the Calvarios, on the days set apart for celebrating the leading facts of the Christian Religion, or on days consecrated to the memory of particular Saints. From these the people collect with tolerable accuracy the true accounts of the life and miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles; but they receive with equal credit legends of Saints, which from the manner in which they are taught, they cannot distinguish from authentic facts; but virtue, which ought to form the ultimate object of all true Religion, which elevates man to the highest rank of which he is susceptible, and assimilates him to a superior order of beings, is left to the confessor to be impressed on the mind of the penitent.

“Auricular confession is but a poor substitute for public preaching; or rather, public teaching, which the Reformation introduced, is an excellent substitute for auricular confession. The dignity of the pulpit makes reproof more severe, denunciations more alarming, advice more powerful, and consolation more soothing; while the intimacy, and sometimes the familiarity of auricular confession, makes the penitent feel but too forcibly that the spiritual guide has all the passions and weakness of those who rely on him.

“I should, however, be sorry to see this practice abolished till some better were introduced in its stead; for though it be obvious that the profligacy of the higher classes is not corrected by their Religion, and whatever dominion they may allow their priests over their faith and their rituals, they allow them very little over their morals, yet, with the middle and lower ranks of society, who form the most virtuous and moral class of the peo-

ple, they have a beneficial influence. With the higher order, the great struggle of the confessor is to keep the mind free from doubts, to enforce submission to the dogmas and ceremonies of the Church, and prevent the inroad of heresy. With the other classes there is no such task; they never read books written by foreigners, nor ever converse with them; they have no doubts on points of faith, no scruples in matters of ceremony, and the task of the confessor is more directly addressed to the formation of the moral habits of sobriety, honesty, and veracity. On these points they have evidently been successful; for I have never been in any country where the mass of the people has approached the conduct of the Spaniards in these respects; in chastity, as far as I can judge, they have not been so successful; whether the evil arise from the celibacy of the clergy, the voluptuous climate, or the remains of Moorish manners, I cannot determine; but there is, in this respect, a degree of profligacy extending to all ranks in this country, which I trust will ever remain unexampled in our own."

While there is no reason to doubt the general correctness of the facts and opinions in the preceding extracts, there is perhaps a little inconsistency between what is said in the last paragraph, and what precedes. It may be doubted, whether the *sobriety, honesty, and veracity* of the lower classes in Spain is to be attributed much to any direct religious influence. Sobriety seems to be a common virtue of southern climates, very little the result of moral restraint in their inhabitants; but depending principally upon physical causes. The other characteristics of honesty and veracity, are, perhaps, to be traced back to the manners and feelings of that age, when chivalry was the pride of Spain; or, at least, to be referred to moral sentiments, not very dependent on the instructions of the confessor.

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EXTRACTS FROM FLAVEL.

It is impossible for any burlesque or misrepresentation of religion, to have a tendency to expose it to more contempt, than the writings of some of those who have been celebrated among the champions of the true faith. This remark may be illustrated by the following quotations from a Sermon of Flavel's. It is the third in the first volume of his works, *on the covenant of redemption betwixt the Father and the Redeemer*.

"Christ having told God how ready and fit he was for his service, he will know of him what reward he shall have for his work; for he resolves his blood shall not be sold at low and



cheap rates. Hereupon (*Isaiah* xlix. 3.) the Father offers him the elect of Israel for his reward, bidding low at first (as they that make bargains use to do) and only offers him that small remnant, still intending to bid higher. But Christ will not be satisfied with these; he values his blood higher than so; therefore, in *ver.* 4, he is brought in complaining, *I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for naught*: This is but a small reward for so great a suffering as I must undergo; my blood is much more worth than this comes to, and will be sufficient to redeem all the elect dispersed among the Isles of the Gentiles. Hereupon the Father comes up higher, and tells him, he intends to reward him better than so, and therefore," &c.

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"The persons transacting and dealing together in this covenant are indeed great persons, God the Father, and God the Son, the former as a *creditor*, the latter as *surety*. The Father stands upon satisfaction, the Son engages to give it. If it be demanded why the Father and the Spirit might not as well have treated upon our redemption, as the Father and the Son? It is answered," &c. Our readers will be satisfied, we think, without the answer.

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"And forasmuch as God knew it was a hard and difficult work his Son was to undertake, a work that would have broken the backs of all the Angels in Heaven, and men on earth, had they engaged in it, therefore he promises to stand by him, and assist, and strengthen him for it. So *Isaiah*, xlii. 5, 6, 7."

The work of redemption it seems was so hard, that it was necessary for omnipotence to be strengthened in its accomplishment. It is afterwards said however, that both the federates in the covenant were 'infinitely able and faithful to perform their parts.'

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"They were hard and difficult terms indeed, on which Christ received the elect from the Father's hand; it was, as you have heard, to pour out his soul unto death, or not to enjoy a soul of you. Here you may suppose the Father to say, when driving this bargain with Christ for you:

*Father.* My son, here be a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice. Justice demands satisfaction from them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them. What shall be done for these souls? And thus Christ returns:

*Son.* O my father, such is my love to and pity for them, that rather than they should perish eternally, I will be responsible for

them as their surety. Bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee. *Lord*, bring them all in, that there may be no after reckonings with them; at my hands shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath, than they should suffer it. Upon me, my Father, upon me, be all their debt.

*Father.* But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite; expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

*Son.* Content, Father, let it be so. Charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it; and though it prove a kind of undoing of me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, (for so indeed it did, 2 Cor. viii. 9. *Though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor,*) yet I am content to undertake it."

The preceding extracts are saved from being the grossest profaneness, only by being the grossest nonsense. Yet Flavel was a very popular writer in his day; and his works are recommended, as of particular value to a young clergyman, by the Professor of Sacred Eloquence at Andover, in the list of select books for a theological library, which he has published. How much his writings will tend to purify and elevate the religious sentiments of those by whom they are studied, and to raise their conceptions of God, and of our Saviour, may be inferred from the extracts that have been made. Their happy influence in leading men to the practice of virtue, may be judged of from the following passage—Sermon 14.

"It would grieve one's heart to see how many poor creatures are drudging and tugging at the task of repentance, and revenge upon themselves, and reformation, and obedience, to satisfy God for what they have done against him. And, alas, it cannot be; they do but lose their labor; could they swelter their very hearts out, weep till they can weep no more, cry till their throats be parched, alas, they can never recompense God for one vain thought. For such is the severity of the law, that, when it is once offended, it will never be made amends again by all that we can do; it will not discharge the sinner for all the sorrow in the world. Indeed if a man be in Christ, sorrow for sin is something, and renewed observance is something; God looks upon them favorably, and accepts them graciously in Christ; but out of him, they signify no more than the entreaties and cries of a condemned malefactor, to reverse the legal sentence of the judge. You may toil all the days of your life, and at night go to bed without a candle. To that sense, that scripture sounds, *Isa. l. ult. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled: This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall die down in sorrow.*



By *fire*, and the light of it, some understand the sparkling pleasures of this life, and the sensitive joys of the creatures ; but generally it's taken for our own natural righteousness, and all acts of duties, in order to our justification by them before God. And so it stands opposed to that faith of recumbency, spoken of in the verse before. By their *compassing themselves about with these sparks*, understand their dependance on those their duties, and glorying in them. But see the fatal issue, *Ye shall lie down in sorrow*. That shall be your recompense from the hand of the Lord ; that is all the thanks and reward you must expect from him, for slighting Christ's, and preferring your own righteousness before his. Reader, be convinced, that one act of faith in the Lord Jesus, pleases God more than all the obedience, repentance, and strivings to obey the law, throughout thy whole life can do."

It has always been the grand object of false religion, to find out something, which would please God better than obedience.

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EXTRACT FROM MITFORD'S HISTORY OF GREECE.

AFTER what has just been quoted, it will be comfortable to hear again the voice of reason. The following passage is from the most judicious, the most acute, and the most philosophical of historians. We do not, however, agree with him in believing that the prevalence at one time of superstition, and at another of scepticism, is an *inevitable* consequence of the nature of man. But the greater are the tendencies to these evils, the more strongly are we called upon to exert ourselves in resisting these tendencies.

"In all countries," says Mitford, "and through all ages, RELIGION and civil government have been so connected, that no history can be given of either without reference to the other. But in the accounts remaining of the earliest times, the attention every where paid to religion, the deep interest taken in it, by individuals and by communities, by people polished equally and unpolished, is peculiarly striking. A sense of dependency on some superior Being, seems indeed inseparable from man ; it is in a manner instinct in him. His own helplessness, compared with the stupendous powers of nature, which he sees constantly exerted around him, makes the savage ever anxiously look for some being of a higher order, on whom to rely : and the man educated to exercise the faculties of his mind, has only to reflect on himself, on his own abilities, his own weakness, his own know-

ledge, his own ignorance, his own happiness, his own misery, his own beginning, and his end, to be directed not only to belief in some superior Being, but also to expectation of some future state, through mere conviction that nature, hath given him both a great deal more, and a great deal less, than were necessary to fit him for this alone. Religion, therefore, can never be lost among mankind ; but, through the imperfection of our nature, it is so prone to degenerate, that superstition in one state of society, and scepticism in another, may, perhaps not improperly be called nature's works. The variety, indeed, and the grossness of the corruptions of religion, from which few pages in the annals of the world are pure, may well on first view excite our wonder. But, if we proceed to inquire after their origin, we find immediately, such sources in the nature and condition of man, that evidently nothing under a constant miracle, could prevent those effects to which the history of all countries, in all ages bears testimony. The fears of ignorance, the interest of cunning, the pride of science, have been the mainsprings : every human passion has contributed its addition."

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## REVIEW.

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### ARTICLE XI.

*Sermons on Various Subjects.* By HENRY COLMAN. Boston, published by J. W. Burditt. T. B. Wait, printer. 1820. pp. 367.

A VOLUME of Sermons from a living author is a rare gift to the Christian public, which ought not to pass unnoticed. A very large proportion of the original works, published in our country, are upon theological subjects, and single sermons and short treatises are abundant. But few have been found bold enough or industrious enough to send from the press a volume of discourses, which having been written hastily, for the ordinary instruction of their people, could only with the greatest labor be prepared for the eye of the reader. Most of those volumes, therefore, which are to show the theological and literary character of our ministers, have come forth under all the disadvantages of posthumous publication ; and although we have no reason to be mortified on their account, especially since amongst them are the sermons of Buckminster, undoubtedly some of the best which the world has produced ; yet we are compelled to make constant allowances, as we read them, and are left to conjecture what they might have been if they could have been completed by their authors. We



are glad to meet with an exception in the volume before us, which will be found in no respect discreditable to the religious or literary character of our community, and which we hope will meet a circulation equal to its merits:

The sermons are twenty three in number, all upon important subjects, and for the most part of a practical character. In this respect they are a fair representation of the general preaching of that class of ministers to which the author belongs ; who do not so much make themselves busy with the speculative opinions of their hearers, as with those subjects of personal character and principles of holy living, which may lead to solid, vigorous, permanent habits of piety and virtue. So far as error or truth in points of doctrinal theology affects this grand and primary object, so far they are insisted on, explained, and recommended or refuted in the pulpit ; but further than is necessary to this end, they are thought improper to be treated before a mixed congregation, many of whom are incapable of fairly entering into the argument, and most of whom probably need more to be impressed with the infinite importance of religion and of duty, and excited to personal interest in the affairs of the soul, than to be instructed in those speculations about which theologians are contending. These may be learned from books, in calm and sober retirement ; and may be discussed in confidential conversation, where there is room to explain, illustrate, and guard against misapprehension. They are proper subjects of private study, where they may be investigated fairly, the arguments on every side examined, and the open Bible be at hand, by which all may be tested. Serious inquirers may thus be instructed and improved. But there would be little edification to the majority of the flock from the introduction of such discussion into the pulpit ; and to refrain from it altogether, would not be *keeping back any thing that is profitable*.

There are only four discourses in this volume, which can in any proper sense be termed *doctrinal*, and these, in conformity to the remark we made above, may with more strict propriety be spoken of as containing practical views of doctrinal truths. The first of these is that *on the miraculous character of Jesus* ; a few extracts from which may serve to show the manner in which Unitarian preachers are accustomed to speak of their master, and in what terms of exalted honor they assert his authority.

“ Every christian must be deeply solicitous to form just apprehensions of the character of Jesus ; neither to ascribe to him attributes which he would himself have disclaimed ; nor to derogate from that transcendant dignity, which belongs to him. We acknowledge with the great apostle, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God ;

we earnestly desire to receive him in the elevated character, in which he claims to be received. It is not an inquiry of small moment, whether Jesus Christ is merely an extraordinary teacher and popular reformer, distinguished above his contemporaries, only by a superior sagacity and greater purity of life and manners ; or a direct messenger from the Deity ; whether his instructions are the suggestions of human reason, or the oracles of the living God ; whether his doctrines and precepts are recommended only by common sense, expediency, self-interest, or experience ; or whether they have descended from heaven, arrayed in all the majesty of their sublime original."

"Let us, my friends, often and seriously examine our religious sentiments. It is not a matter of small moment what we believe. Our views in respect to the proper character of christianity and its divine author, must materially affect our conduct and happiness. The influence and extension of the religion in the world are essentially concerned in them. To receive the gospel only as a useful system of moral duty, and as an agreeable and wise theory of religious instruction ; or, on the other hand, to regard it as a miraculous revelation from God, as a system of religious doctrine dictated by his inspiration, a rule of moral duty sanctioned by his express authority, and a disclosure of the final destiny of mankind made by his immediate illumination, are very different sentiments. To consider Jesus Christ as a wise and good man, however pre-eminent, or to honor him as an inspired teacher and miraculous messenger from God, are sentiments altogether dissimilar in their practical results, in the temper which they inspire, and the conduct to which they lead.

"God forbid, Christians, that our faith should be in any respect unworthy of the religion which we profess ; or that our sentiments concerning Jesus his son should not correspond with the peculiar offices and the unrivalled dignity, with which God has invested him : For God has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."\* pp. 84, 85.

Of the other doctrinal discourses, two are connected in subject, being from the text, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Phil. ii. 12, 13. In the first of these is considered the power of man in regard to his salvation. Having noticed the plea of inability, by which many seek to excuse their irreligion, who "pretend they do not, because they cannot, do as they would ;" our author remarks, that there certainly is a degree of weakness in human nature, which renders man insufficient to attain the summit of moral perfection, without aid from God, and that this aid will be afforded only to those who are faith-

\* Phil. ii. 9—11.



fully laboring to do what they have the power to do. "We are not," he says, "of the number of those, who assert that man is in no degree in these things dependant on God; nor of those, who represent him as a mere machine, incapable of voluntary motion, to be acted upon by an external and miraculous influence. In the formation of his moral character, we believe that man can do something, though we pretend not that he can do every thing; and that God will do much, I would speak with reverence, though he will not do all." These are the general sentiments which the two discourses are designed to explain. The first of them treats separately of man's *power*, and of his *duty* in this respect; which are evidently relative terms, and never would have been imagined to be separable, except for the strange perversions of reason to which the pride of human system has given rise. He first shows, that man's power to *avoid sin* is great, by an appeal to the representations of scripture, and to the conscience and experience of men; though he acknowledges that it is a power which may be weakened and even destroyed, by indulgences of sinful passions and desires. He then, by an appeal to the conscience and experience of his hearers, convinces them, that they have the further power of practising virtue and improving in holiness. We cannot forbear quoting this passage, which seems to us most powerful, and must have made strong impression on those to whom it was personally addressed.

"We next inquire, what is the power of man in regard to the practice of virtue, and his improvement in holiness? We appeal again to your personal experience. Will any then confidently aver, that he cannot acquire the virtues, which his religion inculcates; nor discharge his personal and relative duties? Will any one justly pretend that he cannot extend his knowledge of his duties, his interests, and his relations to another world and to God? Cannot every man enlighten and invigorate his christian faith and hope; and render the principles of religion more familiar to his mind; and give them a commanding influence over his conduct? Cannot every man learn the art of self-government, and acquire the regulation of his thoughts, desires, and passions, so that they may flow in the channel of innocence and usefulness? Is there any one, who cannot cultivate a spirit of kindness, forgiveness and gratitude? Will any man pretend that he cannot love God; nor become resigned to his will; nor cherish a filial confidence in his perfect wisdom and infinite goodness? Has not every man reason and conscience, the discerners, and judge, and guide of duty? Have not all of us peculiar and numerous advantages and means of knowledge, motives, and opportunities for improvement in wisdom and holiness? and when did any one seriously attempt to acquire a knowledge of his duty, apply himself to the various sour-

ces of information, and use the numerous helps which are afforded for this purpose, without attaining the object of his pursuit? When did any man resolutely undertake the improvement of his character, give himself to reflection, to self examination, to prayer, to the study of the scriptures, and to the society of good men, to the regular observance of the institutions of religion, to the practice of self-denial and self-government, to the strict discipline of his understanding, affections, words, and conduct, and not advance with a swift progress in goodness? These inquiries need no reply; you cannot doubt, that in these respects your power is adequate to your duties." pp. 162—164.

The other part of the subject, man's *duty*, is treated with equal force and solemnity. The object of the discourse, our readers perceive, is entirely practical; not an examination and discussion and overthrow of theoretical and metaphysical difficulties, by which theologians have contrived to embarrass the subject; but a simple appeal to the obvious language of revelation, and to the conscience and common sense of man, which show him at once that God has given him the ability to do good, and will consequently require it of him;—which is better than a thousand arguments to confute the pernicious notion that man is unable to do any thing, and must therefore wait till it pleases God to endow him supernaturally with the power. This we conceive to be the right way of combatting erroneous doctrine from the pulpit; the only profitable mode, because the only one that can in most cases be understood, and certainly the only one which will at the same time convince the understanding and affect the life.

In the next sermon a similar method is pursued. The opinion which the writer maintains respecting the doctrine of spiritual assistance, and the connexion of this with the preceding discourse, may be best shown from the words of the Introduction.

"The scriptures hold out the promise of aid, illumination and guidance from heaven. They often speak of the spirit of God, and of a divine influence on the human mind and character. We confide in this doctrine, and rejoice in it, as affording the highest encouragement to sincere and humble virtue. Although man, through the goodness of God, possesses within himself a power sufficient for the discharge of the requisitions, which are made on him; yet, at his best estate and in his highest advances, he is ignorant and imperfect. To him nothing can be more essential and desirable than the succour and direction of that Being, who is almighty and infallible. It is one of the cardinal excellences of Christianity, that it teaches this doctrine; and assures us of this aid; and explains the mode of its communication, as far as is useful, and perhaps as far as is possible, for us to apprehend it." pp. 171, 172.



The first object is to prove "the fact of such an influence being exercised or dispensed." The concluding paragraph under this head sufficiently exhibits our author's opinions.

"It is thus that this divine influence, sometimes denominated the grace of God, may approach us in various channels ; in the ordinary operations of our own minds, or by the events and vicissitudes of life. By any modes, which the wisdom of God may suggest, he may work in us both to will and to do ; and the doctrine of spiritual influences is no other than the doctrine of the particular providence of God, which extends its paternal solicitude to every individual ; which affords to each one the means of knowledge and virtue as is best suited to his condition ; which adapts the discipline of life to his improvement ; and assists the virtuous proficiency of every one, as far as seems proper to infinite wisdom and goodness." p. 176.

He next speaks of "the mode of its communication;" that it is not irresistible, but wholly persuasive, not at all infringing the moral liberty of man ; that its operations are not to be distinguished from those of our own minds ; that it is not arbitrarily bestowed, but according to that universal and equitable rule of providence, by which more is given to those, who have well used that which they have. The sermon closes, like the other, with a practical application of the doctrine.

A similar general method to that which we have remarked in these three sermons, is pursued in the xivth, in treating of the doctrine of *Conversion*. The doctrine is treated altogether with a view to its practical effect. In all the allusions to a variety of opinions and false notions on the subject, not a word is said to excite hostile feeling toward those who may hold opinions different from those of the preacher, or to exasperate a dislike, and create prejudices against their doctrine, or language, or persons ; but he applies himself directly to the consciences and hearts of those before him ; he does not assume the air of a controversialist, or a combatant, and encourage them to go abroad, and wonder at and triumph over the follies and absurdities of others ; he endeavours to bring them to look at themselves, and test their own characters by the truth ; satisfied that the doctrines of the gospel are good for nothing, except so far as they promote the formation of sober, solid, rational piety and morality. We have no love for any other doctrinal preaching. We cannot conceive that any other should be profitable. Faith without works is dead. Right thinking is valuable only as it is accompanied by right living. All the truth in the world will not save him, "who holds the truth in *unrighteousness*." There is indeed another sort of doctrinal preaching, which is easier. It is easier to repeat our arti-

cles of faith, and insist on their saving efficacy in every sermon. It is far easier to declaim on modes and peculiarities of belief, and get up a holy zeal for maintaining the pure system of revealed doctrine. But calmly to set aside the wrong and fortify the right, and lead the hearers to condemn their own, rather than the errors of their brethren,—this is a task indeed; and those ministers, it appears to us, deserve no little commendation for their fidelity, who can pursue this course, unmoved by disappointment, and unseduced into the more easy, more flattering, and more ambitious, but less useful practice of agitating opinions, instead of “teaching and warning” men.

Of the sermons which are exclusively practical, some are upon subjects the most interesting and important which a preacher can select, and present the most sound and judicious views of christian morals and practical piety. We have not room for an analysis of them, but may convey a general idea of what they are by a few remarks and extracts.

It may be said of them, that they are eminently serious in all their views of life, duty, and responsibility. While they do not uphold a gloomy religion, built upon dark views of the condition of man, and the government of God, but on the contrary, imply that it is a cheerful thing as being a message of great joy from a benevolent parent; they yet represent it as demanding of us high duties, and calling us to a solemn account. They do not skim the surface of morality, and allow to the christian all that latitude, which the false liberality of the worldly would incorporate into their religion, letting down the standard of duty and purity to the inclinations of every individual. They set the standard of moral attainment high. They represent the pursuit of christian excellence to be arduous, and its success not the result of indolent or transient exertion. They show him who has entered the list for the prize, that there is some hard fighting to be done, some sacrifices to be made, and a long discipline of watchfulness and self-government to be gone through. In this view we consider the volume as highly valuable; and we cannot help hoping that it may give to some,—who have suffered themselves to be persuaded, without knowing any thing about it, that liberal preaching, as it is called, is loose, flattering, accommodated to the taste of the worldly, and wholly wanting in the solemnity and pungency of the original gospel—more correct and candid notions respecting it.

As specimens of the serious preaching, to which we have here referred, we may point out Sermon iii., *on the comparative claims of Religion and the World*; which explains our proper



concern with the world, points out the dangers to which it exposes our religious characters, and enforces the necessity and reasonableness of a life strictly and entirely devoted to religion :— Sermon xii. containing *Directions for judging of ourselves* :— Sermon xv. *on the difficulties of Christian virtue* ; which speaks of the difficulty of conquering sinful habits, of avoiding the snares of temptation, and, sometimes, of submitting to the present sacrifices which are required :—Sermon xvi. which exhibits *the deceitfulness of sin*, and the tremendous evils which follow it :— Sermon xviii. which enforces the all-important maxim that DUTY should be the supreme object :—and Sermon xxi. *on the uncertainty of life*.

It is evident from the remarks we have made, that these sermons are in the truest sense religious and devotional. The duties of the first table are not neglected in the care to inculcate those of the second. Though they are really *moral discourses*, their morality is not of that sort which crowds away and neglects piety. Man's duties are all built on the foundation of his accountableness to God, and enforced by the idea of his relation to Jesus Christ and a future world. The two first sermons, *on the Incomprehensibility of the Deity*, are specimens of this devotional character ; which treat of the causes of this incomprehensibility, and the lessons of humility, charity, and faith, which it should teach us. Sermon xxii. *on the Christian's hope*, and xxiii. *on the doctrine of Immortality*, may be referred to also as illustrating our remark ; whose complete illustration, however, is to be found in the expressions of devotional sentiment which meet the eye on every page, and are interwoven with the train of thought upon every topic.

Another class of these sermons, and an important one, consists of those in which great stress is laid upon the gospel as a divine communication. This topic is frequently introduced, and much insisted on ; the authority of the religion is urged upon this ground, and men exhorted to its study, reception and practice, by reasons drawn from this source. Some of the most powerful and eloquent passages in the volume are amongst those, which maintain this claim of christianity to our implicit obedience and love, and treat of its infinite excellence and value. The fourth sermon, *on the reception of the gospel* ; and the sixth, entitled, *Christianity a divine communication* ; are examples. Also the seventh, *Christianity a rule of life*, and the eighth, *On motives to the distribution of the scriptures*, are full of these earnest declarations of the worth of the gospel, and of the importance of deep personal interest in it. We must be satisfied with a single extract.

"Do we regard the gospel in that serious light in which these considerations place it? We have faith in it; we would not ourselves think, nor would we have others suppose, that we do not believe it: But is our faith any thing more than some indefinite sentiment of its authenticity? We perhaps respect it as a valuable system of virtue and happiness; as a rule of duty sanctioned by reason and experience; as a fund of consolation abundant and sufficient for human necessities. The early impressions and prejudices of education, and the customs of society, have taught us to revere it. We are the friends of christianity; we cheerfully yield our support to its institutions; we have a satisfaction in its ordinances: But with all this we are deficient in our duty, we have not an adequate impression of its essential importance and proper character, unless we possess a deep conviction of its divine origin and authority; and until this sentiment is habitually associated in our minds with all that it teaches and commands. Let our hearts answer, whether this feeling is foreign from us; or if we constantly and cordially cherish it?

"We inquire, in the next place, if our conduct corresponds with such views of the gospel? Is it not to be feared that there are in this respect great and criminal deficiencies? We are criminally deficient, if the doctrines of christianity are not the subjects of our habitual and familiar meditation; if we can ever look upon them with indifference; if the sacred scriptures are not considered by us as invaluable; if their precepts have not in our regards an authority superior to all other considerations; if the ordinances of the gospel are not observed by us with punctuality and seriousness; if, in fine, christianity, in all its instructions, precepts and institutions, is not the subject of our deepest interest, and the authority to which we refer all our desires and purposes, all our pleasures and employments; if it is not the first object of our thoughts, respect, and affections.

"We must then condemn the indifference which we sometimes plainly express both in our words and conduct. We must regard, as incompatible with christian duty, the slight connexion which our religion appears to have with our ordinary duties and pleasures; the higher preference and interest which we discover in regard to other objects and concerns; the disuse and neglect of the sacred scriptures; and the strangeness and distance which the subject of religion actually holds in respect to many of us. With many persons, who flatter themselves that they believe the gospel, and who would consider themselves as injured, were they charged with being wanting in regard for it, it seems to have little more interest than the concerns of a foreign and distant country. It is not the subject of their public profession or avowed consideration. It does not distinctly show itself in their private conduct nor in their families. They make it no topic of instruction, advice, or persuasion with their friends or children. They furnish no proof of their christianity, but the equivocal testimony of a decent and orderly life, which a



common respect for society is sufficient to produce; or an occasional and careless attention to its public institutions; an attention, which, from whatever motives it proceeds, may perhaps be sufficiently accounted for in the force of early practice and education, the authority of public opinion, a listless curiosity, or the mere love of excitement and variety.

"Is such conduct, christians, consistent with the character of our religion? Does it answer the claims which a direct and immediate communication from God has upon us?" pp. 94—97.

After the full account that we have given, and the large extracts that we have made, it cannot be necessary for us to speak more particularly of the character of the volume before us. We have enabled our readers to form their own judgment. If we were to proceed as rigid critics, we undoubtedly might point out some defects of plan and execution, imperfections of style and unhappy modes of expression. We never have seen the volume which is not obnoxious to such criticisms. But we are too well satisfied, that this work is calculated to do good to the cause of religion, to set the example of exposing its trifling blemishes of the kind adverted to. Few volumes of better sermons are printed, or which we could recommend with greater assurance, that we were doing service to religion, by helping the circulation of a useful book.

The only point of consequence, in which we should differ much from the author, would probably be one, which does not at all affect the merit of the sermons, but is a mere matter of opinion in regard to their general structure. They appear to us to be hardly sufficiently *textual*. The text, in almost every instance, is prefixed to the discourse as a motto merely, and the subject is treated almost, in some cases entirely, without any reference to it. This we think to be an imperfection. We know that it cannot always be avoided; but as a general rule we should say, that the train of thought and manner of treatment of a subject should be made to *appear*, at least, to have been suggested by the text. The connexion between the text and sermon should be made as close and necessary as possible; and we should even prefer, that an exactly philosophical division of a subject should be sometimes sacrificed, for the sake of a division drawn from, or made to appear contained in the text. We cannot at present give all our reasons for this opinion, which we are sensible is only an opinion; but having taken this opportunity to state it, we will observe briefly, that our principal reasons are, we have always found that it is a mode more satisfactory and interesting to hearers in general; it

pleases them by its appearance of being more scriptural; it promotes their acquaintance with the scriptures, by inducing them to refer afterwards to the passage; and it aids their recollection of the topics of discourse, its arguments, truths, and illustrations, by giving them something to which they may be attached in their memories.

The original purpose of preaching was the exposition of scripture. To remark upon a verse instead of a chapter was a departure from the primitive mode; and to remark upon a subject instead of a text, is a still further departure. It is unquestionably on many occasions, and for many reasons, a better mode. But for constant use it is not so profitable. Christians in general care very little for the abstract discussion of some proposition in morals, however rich it may be in illustration or profound in thought. It interests them little more than a problem in mathematics. They do not perceive the use and application of it; it does not connect itself with their habits of reflection and trains of thought; it does not *come home to their business and bosom*. But what is built upon a passage of scripture, which they habitually feel intimately concerns them, and the lessons drawn from which they acknowledge to be of the utmost importance to them, they listen to with reverence and pleasure. It is like talking with an old familiar friend; they can understand it all, and they have perfect confidence in it; and it has an authority which the finest reasoning and most plausible eloquence never can obtain. Hence we find the deepest attention attracted by subjects purely scriptural; the recital of the most familiar parable is heard with greater silence, than the most powerful argument which is new. And those preachers who have attained the greatest popularity, and have produced the greatest effects, will generally be found to have dealt most largely in scripture subjects, scripture allusions, and scripture language. The veneration with which the Bible is regarded, aided by the associations of time and place, imparts authority and power to him who holds it in his hand while he expounds or exhorts. We are persuaded therefore, that the preacher who would be useful, should accommodate to every subject he brings into the pulpit some sentence, or expression, or incident, of holy writ, in such a manner that they shall be indissolubly associated in the minds of his hearers. The subject should never seem unconnected with the Bible; and although in writing thus he may, perhaps, compose much less perfect treatises, yet he will certainly preach far more effectual sermons.



ARTICLE XII.

*Letters to Unitarians, occasioned by the Sermon of the Rev. William E. Channing, at the Ordination of the Rev. J. Sparks.* By LEONARD WOODS, D.D., Abbot Professor of Christian Theology in the Theological Seminary, Andover.—Andover: published by Flagg & Gould. 1820. pp. 160.

*Letters addressed to Trinitarians and Calvinists, occasioned by Dr. Woods' Letters to Unitarians.* By HENRY WARE, D.D., Hollis Professor of Divinity in the University at Cambridge.—Cambridge, published by Hilliard & Metcalf. 1820. pp. 150.

IF religious controversy can be maintained separately from the abuses which are so liable to attend it, we think there can be but one opinion concerning its utility, among intelligent men. But the manner in which it has been too often conducted, has frequently led the peaceful disciples of Christ, of various denominations, to lament its very beginning, and to reprobate it altogether, from an apprehension, that in the heat of disputation, more will be lost in regard to the spirit of religion, than can be gained in respect to the letter. This is so striking an indication of a true christian temper, that we presume Dr. Woods did not mean to exclude every other denomination of christians, in times past, when he says, that "it has been the general sentiment of those, who are denominated *Unitarians* in this country, that *religious controversy* is undesirable, and of dangerous tendency : and that it is the duty of christians of different parties to look with candor on each others' opinions, and not to magnify, beyond necessity, the points of difference." We object, however, to the last half of the sentence, as an explanation of the first; for, if it be the main design of controversy, to distort the opinions of an adversary, and to exclude every thing like candor from the discussion of his sentiments and reasoning,—controversy should be discountenanced and reprobated, by the common consent of all good men, of all religious denominations. Since the learned gentlemen on the opposite sides of the disputed subjects before us, agree sufficiently in their views concerning the spirit and the decorum which belong to controversy on serious subjects, we cannot do better than refer our readers to their respective publications.

It is not our design to discuss any of the doctrines which are so ably handled in the works before us. Our readers are sufficiently aware which side of the controversy we think mainly and essentially true, and to which therefore, our partialities must necessarily lean. Still however, we should feel much regret, if the opinions which we deem true, and of infinite moment, were feebly defended, or if those which we deem erroneous and

pernicious, were not, in our judgment, fully and fairly refuted. Our great wish is to excite a general interest upon the subjects involved in the dispute, which has been occasioned by Mr. Channing's Sermon at the Ordination of Mr. Sparks. Professor Stuart's Letters, concerning the Trinity, have already occupied our attention ;—between those letters and the reviewers, let the public judge. We are saved from entering on the same discussion of Dr. Woods' Letters, by the thorough reply of Dr. Ware. But an account of the subjects treated, and a cursory view of the manner in which the respective individuals have conducted the controversy, seem to be due from us to our readers.

After his introductory letter, Dr. Woods proceeds to treat of the propriety of a creed, and to claim for the orthodox, some of the opinions represented as peculiar to unitarians, particularly as to the unity and moral perfections of God. He next gives the views of the orthodox respecting the character and government of God, and considers the proofs that the orthodox deny the moral perfections of God. He then proceeds to the distinguishing doctrines of Calvinism ; namely, total depravity, election, atonement, and divine influences, or, as in the technical phraseology of Calvinism it has commonly been denoted, *free, special, or irresistible grace*. Then follow additional remarks on representations in Mr. Channing's Sermon—object of Christ's mission—nature of holiness, and principle of moral government. The book concludes with a comparison of the practical influence of the orthodox and unitarian systems.

In his introduction, Dr. Woods informs those to whom his letters are addressed, why *they* are addressed, and what provoked him to write : “ The subjects of the discussion on which I am entering, have been introduced by one who appears before the public as *your representative* ; and the manner in which he treats these subjects is, in most respects, not unlike the manner in which they have generally been treated by those, who have embraced the Arian or Socinian faith. This sermon is a fair specimen of the mode in which we have been accustomed to see our religious opinions opposed in the writings of unitarians. Now it must be allowed to be a sufficient justification of this attempt of mine, if I am fully convinced, that my opinions, and those of the orthodox generally, are misunderstood and essentially misrepresented by unitarians, and particularly by the author of this sermon. I am convinced of this.”

Every honest man must applaud the motives here expressed, and look with impatience for the exposure of the ignorance and perverseness of a large body of christians, represented by one of their most distinguished divines. There are so many refinements in modern Calvinism, and so many artificial means employed to



give a milder expression to its harsh features, and a winning manner to an exterior naturally rude and repulsive, that it would be difficult to make a full portrait, which would be acknowledged for a likeness by any of its friends. But has Dr. Woods, let us inquire, pointed out any material errors in Mr. Channing's delineation of Calvinism, as far as it fell in his way to draw its outlines? It matters not with how many glosses, all bright and fresh, any adept in orthodoxy has for a moment dazzled our vision; the first and main object is to see the naked truth. Having obtained from the best formulas of Calvinists, at different periods, a clear annunciation of their belief, we are equally at liberty, either to believe with them, or to shew that such irrational and contradictory inferences flow from their doctrines, that they are absolutely incredible. Now, let us ask, what has Mr. Channing done more than this? He is accused by Dr. Woods of much more. We quote his own words:

"So far as this Sermon shall come under review, my remarks will relate chiefly to two points. The first is, its affirming that certain opinions belong peculiarly and exclusively to unitarians, when in fact they are held by the orthodox. The second is, the misrepresentations it makes of the opinions which the orthodox entertain, and of the reasoning commonly used to support them."

A little below, he quotes the following passage from Mr. Channing's sermon: "We regard the scriptures as the records of God's successive revelation to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelations of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception."

After reading this quotation, we expected to hear the old charge of want of reverence for the scriptures, iterated against unitarians. But what is our amazement, when, instead of this, Dr. Woods remarks,—

"It is implied in what he [Mr. Channing] says, that this sentiment of reverence for the scriptures is *peculiar* to unitarians. For he first expresses his design to lay before his hearers some of the *distinguishing* opinions of that class of Christians, in whose name he speaks, and then at the close says, that he has given their distinguishing views; that is, their views in distinction from those of the orthodox."

If Mr. Channing, in the division of his subject, had expressed himself exactly in the terms which Dr. Woods would make his readers believe, without any addition, still no fair disputant would endeavour to make the same use of Mr. C's. phraseology which is done in this instance. He would consider Mr. C's. expression of reverence for the scriptures, as a first principle, from which he started, and which he claimed only to hold in common with other

christians. But it was not enough for the Doctor to take things as he found them. In order to accomplish his purpose, he was obliged to snatch a *division* from the middle of the discourse, and place it before and after a passage near the beginning. This to be sure is a small matter, and only bringing together what the author took care to keep separate. All that the Doctor has quoted, is to be found in the sermon, and why should he be bound to the exact order in which it originally stood? Lest our readers, however, should think it of some consequence, we will tell them the whole truth of the case.

Mr. Channing, in the introduction of his sermon, says, "I shall confine myself to topics on which our sentiments have been misrepresented or which distinguish us most widely from others." And, a little below, "I shall endeavour to unfold, 1st. the principles which we adopt in interpreting the scriptures, and 2d. some of the doctrines which the scriptures, so interpreted, seem clearly to express." Then follows the passage which Dr. Woods quotes—"We regard the scriptures as the record of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelations of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception."

There was a reason for this declaration. It is a declaration which every unitarian with whom we are acquainted, would make; and it is a subject, too, concerning which, unitarians as a body, have been grossly misrepresented. Nothing more than this could Mr. Channing mean to imply.

We should dwell somewhat at large upon the other opinions which Dr. Woods charges Mr. Channing with claiming exclusively for unitarians, but which are held by the orthodox, if, in recurring to Dr. Ware's letters, we had not found a full and satisfactory reply. In a youthful theologian we should pass lightly over what seems to us to be so little worthy of a learned Professor. But it is lamentable to find one who should be a guide to the inexperienced, and who, we believe, is, by the natural vigor of his understanding, so capable of the office, deceiving himself, and confounding things most obviously distinct. Every person who heard, or who has read Mr. Channing's sermon, knows perfectly well, that all which is there said concerning the *unity* of God, is said in contradistinction to a *trinity* of persons, and a great part of his design was to shew that the two doctrines are irreconcilable. The trinitarian has an equal right to bring his proofs for three equal persons or *distinctions*, and to reconcile this theory of the manner of the divine subsistence with the unity of God. This, if any thing, was what it belonged to Dr. Woods to perform; for it is incredible that he should think the author of the sermon



intended to assert, that any christians *denied* that God is *one being*, whatever absurdities might be mingled with their belief. Nor is it to be supposed, that he was ignorant of the many creeds and confessions, which begin with the declaration of a belief in one God, and defend it by adding *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*.

The same injustice we conceive to be done to Mr. Channing, when he is said to deny that the orthodox believe in the *moral perfections* of God. We are alike unable, as Mr. Channing, to perceive how their belief on this subject comports with their peculiar doctrines ; and it seems, according to Dr. Woods, that it does not belong to them to show their consistency. But this is the very point at issue ; for it is unreasonable to require any one to believe in what seems to him a contradiction, to reproach him for his want of faith, and yet take no pains to remove the difficulties, which he cannot surmount. We cannot but think Dr. Woods extremely unguarded (to use the mildest epithet) in this part of his letters. Neither Mr. Channing, nor any liberal christian, would affirm that the orthodox disbelieve a single moral attribute of Deity. On the contrary, it is well known, that in their abstract views, and in dwelling upon some of the divine dispensations, they are not wanting in a full expression of their belief in the moral perfections of God. But it is impossible for us to imagine, that when the genuine doctrines of Calvinism are in actual array before them, they should conceive of him as they ought, either as a just and merciful sovereign, or as a kind parent. These being our views, it certainly becomes us, on every proper occasion to make our solemn protest against such an unholy alliance of professions and doctrines, however sincerely they may be made and held by the same individual. We would not, however, and we claim no such right, charge him with the guilt of inferences from his doctrines, which, however conclusively they flow from them, he firmly denies. This is an infringement of those rules of charity, which should be held sacred by all ; and we hope we shall never be so far blinded by the zeal of controversy, as to lose sight of that law of love, implanted in the human heart, which forbids us to ascribe to others the worst motives which can be supposed to govern them, and to impute to them more degrading opinions, than they choose to avow.

In regard to the misrepresentations, which are said by the author of the Letters to Unitarians, to be found in Mr. Channing's sermon, and which also he affirms to be such as are commonly to be found in Unitarian writings, little need be said. It is a heavy charge, and supported by very slight proofs. Still, we have no doubt, it is brought in sober earnest, and we think it can be satisfactorily explained. When we propose a favourite

moral or religious doctrine or proposition to others, thinking that we understand all its relations and consequences, we are disappointed, perhaps grieved, and, it may be, mortified, that they perceive different relations and different consequences; and we are apt, in such cases, to think that those who come to these different results are chargeable with prejudices and partial views, and not we ourselves. Now it is certainly a right of the dissenting party, to disprove the doctrine by his own process, and, if it be an odious doctrine, to make it appear so. In doing this he will be very likely to excite our displeasure, and, it may be, incur the accusation, without any of the guilt, of impiety. More than this, which comes to the very point: we shall be prone to consider our antagonists as aiming to fix on us all the false and unworthy notions, which he intends merely to connect with our favourite doctrine. Does not this very nearly agree with the recent history of Calvinism? They who claim the exclusive title of orthodox, are continually lamenting the defections from their number, which they perceive around them; and, in some instances, more of anger than of compassion, seems to have been excited in the breasts of their champions; and it is natural enough that they should account for the loss of their numbers, by thinking that their doctrines are misunderstood or perverted.

Another thing which takes off the edge from this charge of misrepresentations, is the extreme difficulty of stating a Calvinistic doctrine, in such a manner that it will be acknowledged by those to whom it belongs. Every one must have felt this difficulty in regard to the doctrine of the trinity; for it is so impossible for even a *believer* in the term itself, and in the common formulas by which it is more fully expressed, to give an explanation of his views, to which all other believers of the doctrine will assent, that it can hardly be expected of him who *opposes* the doctrine, to contend against it in any shape in which it will be recognised by many of its friends. And we cannot with propriety be said to *misrepresent*, what has never been *definitely* or *intelligibly represented*. The same remarks apply, though not so completely, to the more distinguishing doctrines of the Calvinist.

We have already said more than we intended concerning Dr. Woods' letters; but there still remain a few cursory remarks, which we wish to add.

In the first place, it seems to us that Dr. Woods has very unnecessarily, and not much to the credit of his cause, begun and prosecuted his purpose, with a fixed determination to find Mr. Channing opposed to him in every particular; and that in doing this he has forgotten a part of Mr. Channing's design, as



expressed in the second division of his discourse. Mr. C. there says, "I now proceed to state some of the views, which we derive from that sacred book, [the scriptures] particularly those which distinguish us from other christians." He does not design, it appears, to state those views ONLY which distinguish Unitarians from other christians; but amongst others to state these *particularly*. But Dr. Woods does not see this distinction; and imagining that the liberal party disclaim all agreement with him, will insist upon it, that whenever Mr. C. states any of the views which he derives from the scriptures, he appropriates them wholly to himself and his friends. We have heard of Dr. Woods as a distinguished logician, and we have no doubt that he is so; but it is a most unfortunate oversight, in one who would preserve this reputation, to infer, that, because two individuals differ in particulars, therefore they must differ also in generals. We had before believed it possible, that there might be a general agreement, and specific differences.—We do not make these remarks to claim any nearer relation to the Calvinist than belongs to us. But we certainly do not wish to be, or to be thought, such monopolisers of truth, as to take offence at any of their approaches to our manner of reasoning and thinking. On the contrary, we are always rejoiced at every approximation to what we consider just views on religious subjects.

There is another specimen of reasoning in Dr. Woods' pamphlet, which appears to us rather singular. It is conceded by him, that much of the language of scripture, on which some of the peculiar Calvinistic doctrines are made to depend, is figurative; and that the figures are of a kind by no means similar to the accustomed modes of expression of the modern European languages. After this concession, what should we naturally expect him to subjoin? His opponents say, you should explain these figures, and represent the doctrines in terms that shall not be misunderstood. No, it is replied, these figures are scriptural, and no one can be blamed for imitating them; let metaphors be heaped upon metaphors; you may explain them, if you please, as you do those of the scriptures; but a rich, oriental style is the more impassioned and moving; and if the figures were explained, or put in literal expressions, more would be lost in emotion than would be gained in intelligibleness. Such are the fair deductions from the kind of defence which Dr. Woods makes of some of his calvinistic brethren. But, after all, we cannot but express our thanks for all that he would seem to give up or to qualify, in regard to the offensive peculiarities of calvinism, though many, doubtless, will look with fearful apprehension at any qualifications of what they consider the true orthodox faith.

This leads us to one remark further concerning the publication of which we are speaking. There appears, throughout, an unlooked for timidity in the author, which makes him shrink from a full view of what we had always considered to be calvinism, and of what, in the end, we find to be the *author's* calvinism. We do not charge him with intentional evasions; for we have no right to doubt that he intends to be as frank in the statement of his tenets, as we claim to be in that of our own. But we are persuaded that no system of theology can long rest secure, upon such a tottering foundation as this author has laid: "A house divided against itself cannot stand." It is gratifying to us, we confess, to find any of the technical phraseology of a religious system, which we think to be wrong, either abandoned, or vindicated with hesitation and doubt. It augurs well for liberal christianity; for it is here, as in many other occasions of strife among mankind, that certain watch-words of party serve more to rally its forces, and kindle the passions of its votaries, than any well-ascertained points of difference between them and their supposed enemies. But whenever a distinguished partisan, however confident he may at present be of the truth of his dogmas, either trembles at the consequences which appear to flow from them, or is brought with extreme reluctance to consider those consequences, there is some reason to hope, that his prejudices will ultimately become subjected to a sound understanding and an enlightened conscience.

Thus much concerning Dr. Woods' management of the controversy, on the side of calvinism. There is certainly much good, mingled with what we cannot approve, in his letters, and much that is plausible and ingenious; but they fail in that open and direct use of the means of attack and defence, which generally characterise the writings of fair men, in a good cause.

Dr. Ware's letters, we think, will be thought, by none, to fail in the particulars last mentioned. His course is never devious or obscure; nor can we perceive that he ever so forces the language of his opponent, as to make it express more or less than was intended. His work bears on the face of it, that it is the production of a writer who has a perfect confidence in his cause, founded on a thorough and intimate acquaintance with the bearing of the arguments he is to use and to meet. He takes no advantage of the mistakes, inconsequent reasonings, and in some instances petulant expressions of his opponent, which to a less forbearing controversialist would afford ample occasion of remark. Indeed we are at a loss which most to commend in this work—the variety of knowledge which has brought to every argument the requisite proofs and illustrations, the consummate



ability with which these materials are used, the beautiful perspicuity of arrangement and style, which places a discussion,—commonly among the most intricate,—within the reach of all readers of scripture of good understanding, or the excellent temper, which, while the reader sees that every argument is a victory, forbids any indication of consciousness of this, on the author's part. In all these important respects, we hesitate not to call this work a model in controversial writing. It gives us great satisfaction to learn that it circulates very extensively,\* as we doubt not it will be allowed to be one of the most convincing proofs, which have been before the public, of the power of good sense and diligent and unprejudiced investigation, to show that the sacred writings contain a consistent and perfect system of faith; and we do not suppose that the points in dispute can any where be found in so condensed, and at the same time, so popular a shape. We are sure that they cannot be treated in a temper of greater dignity and moderation, nor do we expect to see the claims of pure and primitive Christianity to respect, asserted with a richer eloquence, than in the last of the letters of Dr. Ware. Indeed they appear to us to be so conclusive on the subjects of which they treat, that we should not have touched upon the controversy at all, if it had not appeared to us to be a solemn duty, to exert what influence we have, to persuade all thinking and inquiring men, of all religious parties, to read the publications which have now fallen under our notice. We are unwilling that those who believe in the main as we do, should read either, without reading the other. And we would earnestly exhort all who are, or who think themselves to be Calvinists, to commence with Mr. Channing's Sermon, which occasioned this controversy upon Calvinistic doctrines; or, if they begin with Dr. Woods, not to fail of reading, with as much attention, the answer contained in the letters of Dr. Ware. This is our sincere, and our only wish. Be the reader of what religious opinions he may, and whatever influence these writings may have upon his articles of faith, of one thing we are perfectly satisfied; that, whatever apologies he may make for the manner in which Dr. Woods has managed his side of the controversy, it will be impossible for him to deny that Dr. Ware has approached the subject in a manner more open and ingenuous, and vindicated his cause by means more direct and plain and explicit, than the author whom he followed and opposed. With these earnest exhortations, we leave the subject; most grateful that this controversy has arisen; most grateful, as

\* We understand that another edition has been called for and is now in press.

well-wishers to the cause of pure and undefiled religion, for the effect it has produced already on the public mind, and confidently auguring for it a result, most propitious to the power and prevalence of the truths and spirit of the gospel.

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ARTICLE XIII.

*Historical documents and critical remarks on Unitarianism and Mahometanism, in reply to Mr. Henry D. Sewall.* By the Rev. J. FELTUS, Rector of St. Stephen's Church, New-York : A. Mercein. 1820. pp. 28.

*Reply to the Rev. J. Feltus, Rector of St. Stephen's, on the alliance of Unitarianism and Mahometanism ; with the Unitarians' appeal.* By HENRY D. SEWALL. New-York : C. S. Van Winkle. 1820. pp. 30.

IN our third number of this volume, we gave some account of the religious solemnity of laying the corner stone of a Church, designed for the use of the first congregational society in the city of New-York. This society was gathered in the spring of 1819. In May of that year, two clergymen of this place, returning from the south, officiated on the Sabbath, at the request of several gentlemen, in the hall of the medical society. A few days after, a meeting was held, of persons desirous of the establishment of a new congregation. They associated themselves with that object, became incorporated, and for temporary accommodation, procured a convenient room,—which they fitted up as a chapel,—where, with some interruptions, public worship has ever since continued to be solemnized by clergymen from this vicinity. On the 29th of April last, they laid, with appropriate religious services, the corner stone of a church, which they expect to occupy in the course of the winter.

In general this society has no uncommon cause to complain of being denied that respect and liberal estimation of their design, which they who show to others, prove that they feel entitled to themselves ; and while we do not forget that forbearance is not always a merit,—for there are persons, whose undertakings it is well understood opposition will not discourage, and whose motives it is felt to be something more than silly to question,—we would yet cheerfully give all their due praise to those who in these difficult times have exercised that thrice difficult virtue, charity to dissentients. In the pulpit indeed, that most eligible of positions whence to fall upon an adversary, there have oc-



casionally been used expressions, which, as they are best not used more than once, we will not repeat, though they have come to our knowledge. Nothing however took a tangible shape till in July last there appeared in the paper of a Mr. Stone, a communication\* under the taking title "Unitarianism and Mahometanism," containing the often told story of a "negociation" attempted to be opened by "a cabal of Socinians," with the Moroccan ambassador to Charles II. This gave rise to some remarks published a few days after in the same paper, and to these succeeded the pamphlets whose titles are prefixed.

The time and place where the scene of this portion of history is laid, are the audience chamber of the ambassador of Morocco, near the English court, in Aug. 1682. Out of the obscurity of that age, a voice has come, declaring that the African envoy being about to depart, his business with the rulers of the nation done, and the wind already "sitting in the shoulder of his sail," there appeared a cabal of Socinians, (videlicet, either Mons. Verzé alone, or Mons. Verzé

\* The paragraph begins thus,—“The following interesting paper was handed to us by the Rev. F. J. Feltus, Rector of St. Stephen's Church in this City, and is now laid before the public as a curious historical document :

#### UNITARIANISM AND MAHOMETANISM.

It is a circumstance but little known, that in the reign of Charles the Second, the English Unitarians opened a negociation with the Mahometans ; through the medium of the ambassador from the Emperor of Morocco, at that time accredited in England.

When this thing was stated to Dr. Priestley in the course of one of his controversies ; the doctor thought proper to treat the subject with great contempt, as an invention got up to bring the Unitarians into disrepute. The evidence of this extraordinary fact however, is still preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth. Among the codices *manuscripti* Tenisoniani, there is a thin folio marked 673. It contains four tracts ; the first of which is the very letter to Ameth Ben Ameth, published by Dr. Leslie, written in a very fair hand.

On the preceding leaf are these remarks :—“these are the original papers, which a cabal of Socinians in London offered to present to the embassadour of the king of Fez and Morocco, when he was taking leave of England, Aug. 1682. The said embassadour refused to receive them, after having understood that they concerned religion. The agent of the Socinians was Monsieur Verzé. Sir Charles Cottrell, Kn. Mr. of Cerem : then present, desired he might have them, which was granted, and he brought them and gave them to me,—Thomas Tenison, then Vicar of St. Martin's in the Fields, Middl.”

Then follow some extracts from the letter above mentioned, to the ambassador, and the communication closes with the certificate of Horsley that the latter as given in Leslie's works, and the memorandum of Tenison, as quoted above, are true copies from the originals in the Archbishop's Library, with which he compared them, Jan 15th, 1789.

† So Dr. Feltus—with a pertinacious contempt of the Latin accident—invariably calls them.

with another kindred spirit, non liquet,) and proposed to him to make one trial more of his talent for affairs, in a piece of negociation, the object of which they with true diplomatic wariness, suffered not to leak out, any further than that it "concerned religion." The Moor, either thinking that he had had enough of diplomacy, or believing, with many more orthodox men, that religion was a thing best left to priests, declined the proposition; whereupon the other party, forgetting the caution which it is prudent to use with regard to state papers, and thinking it a pity, no doubt, that compositions so patiently elaborated, written in so "very fair a hand," and so carefully bound in "the thin fol. No. 673," should after all be lost, very courteously presented them to Sir Charles Cottrell, knt. master of ceremonies, in acknowledgment of his politeness experienced on the occasion, and took their leave. By Sir Charles they were given, it is said, to Thomas Tenison, then vicar of St. Martin's in the fields. Dr. Tenison deposited them in the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, and, derived either from this source, or some other,—in the simplicity of our hearts we affirm, we know not which is designed to be implied,—one of them saw at last a moment's light in a controversial work of Leslie.

Time sped, His dusky excellency reposed from public cares in the cushioned halls of Garbich. Mons. Verzé, and the nameless philosopher,—the associate of his labours, if associate there were,—slept soundly with their fathers, and as soundly slept the tale in which they figured, in the undusted folios of Charles Leslie. There, after a century's lapse, Bishop Horsley found it, and having learned to his thorough satisfaction, in the often fought fields with Priestley, how little slender arguments avail, resolved to try the strength of a stout and valiant implication, and set up this, a most impressive scare-crow, to cover his retreat. Priestley laughed at the man of straw, and went on his victorious way. In possession of Leslie, Horsley, or Gregory, Dr. Feltus of St. Stephen's found him; and not doubting, that yet, with dexterous management, he might be made to do good service, set him up in a column of the Commercial Advertiser, like a bashful rogue in the pillory, with "Unitarianism and Mahometanism" branded in great characters on his forehead, to bear the peltings of whomsoever it may concern; and lest his testimonials should seem in any point deficient, the same gentleman has established the characters of Tenison and Leslie by references to "*the Biog. Dic.*" by which we find, on turning to the names, we are to understand that inexpugnable authority, the universal biography of Lempriere.

We would not willingly spoil innocent recreation, nor act the part of those vexatious persons, who before a good story has had justice done it, come in with some homely fact to dull the point,



and stop the merriment; but we think it has had a fair chance, and that we shall not be thought rude or precipitate, if like Trinculo, we now "let loose our opinion, hold it no longer."

In the first place, if the paper published is authentic, and the second-hand story of Dr. Tenison is true, that it was offered to the misbelieving legate, it is a matter of entire unimportance. It is an insulated fact. It is nobody's business. Allowing the whole to be as stated, it amounts to nothing more, than that a French *savant*, or a French adventurer, paid his respects to the ambassador on his departure, either to offer him a disinterested compliment, or to make a little interest for himself, and either brought or did not bring with him—it does not appear which,—a friend to share in the sunshine of favour which he anticipated. To ensure a duly honorable reception, he appears to have prepared himself with an offering like those with which the improvisatori besiege the doors of a traveller, on his arrival in one of the cities of Italy, one of which, an original composition given to a friend, we have before us. Two most philosophic treatises had he written, with which he was pleased, as authors are wont to be with their treatises; but distrusting the taste of Christendom, and fearing that should he look to that quarter for his reward, he must content himself for life, like Milton, with a forethought of fame, he resolved to trust his reputation with the children of Ishmael. Or, as probably, wishing to turn the versatile talents of his nation to account, he chose this way for one as promising as any, to recommend himself, thinking, that access once found into his excellency's graces, he might get the first vacant place of some *cadi* or dervise, or haply find employment as an engineer on the double wall of Fez. However this might be, he brought his papers, and with them a dedicatory epistle, containing as many concessions of faith at the expense of honesty, as dedications were required to do by the practice of the age. The characteristic politeness of the subject of the grand monarque, being met however by a reserve as characteristic on the other part, with great vacancy of stare, and curling of mustachios, he presented his writings to the first person who asked him for them, with a complaisance altogether surprising, when the circumstances are considered; for he thus put into the possession of an English knight, papers, containing sentiments, which, according to his own affecting account would, if divulged, expose him to "fire and thunder, and gaols, and swords of princes, bishops, courts, prisons and inquisitions,"\* and all other evils, natural and artificial, which extreme apprehension could conceive, or Parisian volubility set forth in words. On this dedicatory epistle (doubtless a remarkable opening of a treaty) is the

\* Dedicatory epistle in Dr. Feltus' pamphlet, p. 12.

foundation of the history of a *negociation* built. Whether one person or two were privy to it, is doubtful, for sometimes the singular number\* is used, and sometimes mention is made of two philosophers; but that this dangerous "cabal of Socinians" consisted at most of but two, appears on the face of the dedication itself, the author or authors of which are at much pains to account, "for the slenderness of their persons, parts and refinue," by which may or may not be understood, the spare visages and thread-bare uniform of Grub-street. "Our people," say they, "are numerous in Poland, in Hungary, in Holland as well as England, but being under the threats of such unchristian persecutions, we cannot open ourselves, nor argue touching our faith, but—to the endangering our lives and fortunes. Countenance therefore this philosophical plainness (that's part of our profession) which emboldens *us two*, to offer you rather than fail, even a mess of our own trade."—But in vain the attempt, whether to dedicate or to treat. Alike in vain the graces of him or them that appeared, and the apologies for them that appeared not. The phlegmatic Musulman was impracticable, and the disappointed author went his way. Ah! could the unhappy Verzé, when he retired from the presence of the cross-legged and cross-grained Osmanlee with quicker pace, and less self-complacency than he came, could he but have known that his despised dedication would fill a century after the "speaking trump of fame," and be called by an English prelate "the opening of a negociation with his excellency Ameth ben Ameth, ambassador of the Emperor of Morocco, at the English court,"† vanity would have brought her precious balsam, and the presence-chamber been emerged from with a most buoyant step.

What particular ultimate plan might be had in view in this "opening of a negociation," we profess ourselves not sufficiently versed in tricks of state, to be able to determine with much certainty. The first object, we think it is sufficiently apparent, was to introduce Mons. Verzé to the notice of him of Barbary,‡

\*"Therefore *I say*," Dedicatory epistle in Dr. Feltus' pamphlet, p. 9. "Those princes *I mentioned*," Do. p. 10. "who are but *two* single philosophers." Do. p. 9.

† Horsley's Letters to Priestley, p. 266.

‡ "We herewith present unto your excellency a faithful transcript of that letter,—because it is a piece of rarity and learning; and chiefly for that it is the foundation on which we build another small piece or two in the same language;—the which we here *dedicate* likewise unto your emperor, to your excellency, and to his Mauritanian subjects, *the which comprehends the main design of our waiting on you at present*." Ded. Epis. in Dr. F's. pamphlet p. 7.



and set him afloat on the tide, which, "taken at the flood leads on to fortune;" but whether the ulterior plan of operations of the aspirant was to convert the Mahometan world to the faith, or to try his hand at an expurgated edition of the Koran, as he sometimes seem to hint,\* or only to play the part of the more illustrious Gaul of later days, the Egyptian Imaum Buonaparte, we confess we know not. If it was to signalize his ingenuity by pointing out some resemblance between the christian doctrine, as he understood it, and the doctrine of the prophet, hard though the task might be, he would have in undertaking it the sympathy of Dr. Feltus; for (contrary, we own, to what we thought the design of his work) that gentleman seems to think this a point to be maintained by his own friends, and insists that the doctrine of the prophet bears a nearer resemblance to orthodoxy than to unitarianism.† Or if he designed to conciliate Mahometans, by shewing them that in one important point, the unity of God, they agreed with some Christians, it was but repeating the unprofitable attempt which Trinitarians have again and again made with all zeal, (*insudantes operi*, as Griesbach has it,) to conciliate the eastern idolaters, by persuading them that in the doctrine of the trinity, there is a coincidence between the Christian system and the Hindu mythology. Whatever his purpose was, he certainly kept it with uncommon care to himself, rejecting the Latin language, which he could write, and his excellency might have got some mufti to interpret,—the French, which was his own expressive mother-tongue, and which the Mahometan, by means of his knowledge of *Lingua Franca*, might have spelt out,—and the Arabic, in which it is not to be doubted he had taken care to accomplish himself,—rejecting these, to vent his heresies in English, as if consulting the exclusive and special convenience of the objects of his terror and aversion, the orthodox authorities of church and state. But whatever his plan or expectations might be, it is certain that he might flatter himself with the prospect of monopolizing the advantage contemplated. He kept his secret as carefully as the late Stonington discoverer of a continent of tame seals. He signed no letter, called no names, appropriated not even his dedicatory oblation in any less equivo-

\* Do. p. 9. "Those contradictions were foisted into the scattered papers found after Mahomet's death, of which in truth the Alcoran was made up," et al.h.m.

† "Mahometanism, in many respects has much stronger claims (meaning probably, a much closer resemblance) to orthodox Christianity, than Unitarianism." Do. p. 24.

cal way than that which writers use, when they put beneath their dedications "the author,"—a phrase which carries meaning to the reader far seldomer than they think,—and succeeded even in keeping his associate so wholly in the back ground, that even the name of that most philosophic person has not struggled down to our times. As to having had an understanding with Unitarians, if this were not disproved by the trouble he takes to account for his coming alone, the idea would be put at rest by the reply made to Leslie by Emlyn, the principal Unitarian of the time, who must, if any man, have been privy to such a measure, and whose veracity no one will venture to call in question. "Forasmuch," says he, (Tracts vol. II. p. 98,) "as I can learn nothing of any Unitarians of any such address from them, nor do you produce any subscribers' names, I conclude no such address was ever made by any deputed from them."\*

It will be seen from what we have said, that, except as we are friends to the truth of history, we are as indifferent as possible, whether the paper, which some call with the author an *epistle dedicatory*, and others call a *diplomattick note*, was in solemn earnest designed to be presented to the Mauritanian or not. Yet forasmuch as we are animated by that same disinterested and ingenuous regard† to historical verity, which induced Dr. Feltus to put the story in the paper, as an historical document "new and rare," we will go on to say in the second place, that we believe it to be all a fraud. There are many thoughts and expressions such as very obviously no one would be likely to select in conveying his own sentiments, but which yet a writer would very naturally use concerning sentiments of which he himself thought ill, while assuming the character of an advocate for them. If such a paper were really designed for a Moorish ambassador, there is no reason why it should be written in English, but all reasons against it. If it were expected to fall into the hands of the English master of ceremonies, this would be the language chosen. If a real bona fide dedication were intended, it would not be likely to go at such length into dangerous subjects. But if a forgery, the form of a dedication would be likely to be chosen as having enough of probability to make the fraud pass—a thing which the shape of a formal proposition would forbid. Into this, great care would be taken to press obnoxious sentiments, and between the two, dedica-

\* For an account of the character and sufferings of this excellent confessor, See Christian Disciple, vol. I.

† "In publishing the documents above referred to, I had no intention whatever, to enter into any doctrinal discussion. It was a simple communication of historical fact, known indeed to the learned, but with which the public were little acquainted." p. 4.



tion, and *projet* of a treaty, we might expect a non-descript production, like that which we find. If all this could be got over, it is quite too much for belief, that there should be given up without compulsion to an English officer, a paper declaring opinions, the very suspicion of which, the authors say, exposed them to all sorts of persecutions.

And to this internal evidence against the authenticity of this paper, and much more, which we have not room to remark on, but which will be manifest to every reader, there is no unsuspicious external evidence to oppose. No proof has been given that the memorandum of Tenison is genuine ;—no proof that this paper was in the Lambeth library, one month before Horsly examined it in 1789. A presumption against its being there at the time pretended, is afforded in the fact that it was not cited, except by Leslie, at a time, when religious controversy ran very high, and with proper management, it might have been made to do excellent service. But waving this, and granting that, according to the memorandum, it was given to the archbishop of Canterbury, by a person who himself received it from a Frenchman, which Frenchman had first offered it in his presence to the Moroccan envoy ; we still have, not to say no proof that this man was an Unitarian agent, but no proof that in any sense he was an Unitarian himself. We believe that (if a real personage) he was neither ; but an agent of enemies of Unitarians. The treasonable dedicatory epistle was first made public in a work of Leslie. He offered no proof that it was authentic. He introduced it with these words only, “ I will here present the reader with a rarity, which I take to be so, because of the difficulty I had to obtain it.” He does not insist on the inferences which he pretends to draw from it, by any means with such urgency as we should expect from one entertaining his views, if he believed it genuine. We suppose no one has patience to read his six dialogues, but we have turned them over, and have not observed that he recurs to this letter any where after the remarks made on producing it. He seems to avail himself of it timidly, as if he feared to make it of consequence enough to expose it to the chance of detection ; and when its genuineness had been called in question by Emlyn, he passes this over in his “ answer to the examination,” though he goes fully into the other points in dispute. We believe that he knew more of its history than it would have been for his credit to acknowledge. To say nothing of Bishop Burnet’s testimony to his character, (Burnet’s Hist. vol. iv. pp. 278, 279,) his treatment of Tillotson, in publishing extracts from the sermons of that prelate, pretending them to be the work of a Socinian, shows him to be a man capable of almost any dishonesty. He was a bigot in an age when sound

doctrine was thought an omnipotent dispenser from fair dealing,—an intriguing spirit, in an age of unprincipled intrigue,—attached to a political cause which never flourished by any thing else,—connected with persons to whom a talent for it would above all things recommend him. He was capable of a plot like this ; and if he were so happy as to find a suitable instrument among those of whom Johnson says,

“ All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,”

the opportunity would not have been lost on him. In every view we take of it, it seems to us far less probable, that this was an emissary of Unitarians, of any sort, to get them into repute abroad, than an orthodox emissary to bring them into discredit at home.

This attack has caused us no uneasiness for the prosperity of the Church in New-York. Reproach so very obviously unmerited, commonly serves the party assailed. Truth has scarcely a better ally than the dislike which would injure, but knows not how ; and to a society which has members that can reason and write like Mr. Sewall, it may confidently be said, in the words of his motto, *Fear not, little flock*. If the author of the other pamphlet would take our advice, he would forthwith discard the argumentum ad invidiam, if he knows what that means, from his controversial armoury. It always prejudices a good cause, and commonly betrays a bad one. The more that is said in this way, with the worse grace will it by and by be retracted. He perfectly well knows, that it can be said with no more truth, that the Unitarians of New-York are disposed to become or advocate Mahometans, than that he regularly officiates every Saturday with a sash over his shoulders, in the synagogue in Mill-street. We beg him to remember, that if Unitarianism could be destroyed with such weapons, it would have been long ago defunct ; and if he is not aware of it, we inform him, that an opinion that Unitarians are not wholly excluded from a share in that charity which “ thinketh no evil,” has of late been gaining ground, at least in this vicinity. We recommend it to his adoption.

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#### ARTICLE XIV.

*Tracts designed to inculcate moral conduct on Christian principles. Published by the Christian Tract Society in England. 5 vols. 18mo. Boston. Wells & Lilly.*

THE religious community have cause to feel much indebted to our publishers, for putting them in possession of this admirable collection of moral and religious tracts. A work of this nature has hitherto been a desideratum. Some of the religious tracts in



circulation are of decidedly injurious tendency, and, if there were no antidote in their stupidity, we should fear might exert a pernicious effect on the public sentiment. In others, as in some of the publications of Miss More, erroneous opinions are so intimately blended with just, and such a charm thrown over them by the power of the writer, as not unfrequently to leave us doubtful whether the impression likely to be produced is such as we could conscientiously encourage; whether most good is likely to be done by the just views, or evil by the wrong. The republication of the Christian Tract Society's collection takes away all excuse for circulating bad tracts for want of better. This collection makes a work very near to perfect in its kind. It consists of dialogues, essays, addresses, and in great part of fictitious narratives, which, besides the merit they possess as specimens in that kind of composition, which is not small, have that of enforcing with great felicity and power, each of them some important religious truth. The stories of William's Return, and of Good Luck and Good Conduct, for example, are in the very best style of works of this nature. We recommend it with perfect confidence to heads of families, who wish to put into the hands of children and dependants a work suited at once to interest, and in the most important respects to profit them.

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## INTELLIGENCE.

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*The Evangelical Missionary Society in Massachusetts.*—The annual meeting of this institution was holden on Thursday, 5th October, in the vestry of the West Church, Boston. The discourse was delivered by the Rev. Abiel Abbot, of Beverly, from Gal. iv. 10. *It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* The collection after the discourse, was \$83.25. The following donations have been made within the last half year, exclusive of a large number of smaller sums from individual contributors, for which we have not room.

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Through the Rev. Wm. E. Channing, donation of a parishoner,                | \$20 — |
| Through Rev. Charles Lowell, balance of the contribution from his Society, | 19 —   |
| From Ladies of the New North Society, Boston,                              | 44 24  |
| From members of the New South Society,                                     | 95 —   |
| From members of Second Church, Middle Street,                              | 97 —   |
| From members of Brattle Street Church,                                     | 143 —  |
| Through Rev. A. Abbot, collection from ladies in his parish, in Beverly,   | 35 52  |
| From the Ladies' Cent Society in Concord, through the Rev. Dr. Ripley,     | 7 21   |
| Rev. Dr. Bancroft, collection from the Ladies in his parish at Worcester,  | 43 —   |
| "Social Circle," in Northborough,  | 15 —   |

The officers of the Society were rechosen, except that the Rev. F. Parkman is secretary, in place of Rev. S. Ripley, who declined, and Benjamin Guild, Esq. is treasurer.

*Society for employing the Poor.*—We have seen an uncommonly modest, sensible, well written pamphlet, explaining the views of a society lately established in this town, which has for its object the employment of the female poor. We are fully impressed with the belief, that one of the methods necessary to be adopted in order to diminish the evils and temptations, and prevent the spread of pauperism, is the systematic provision of employment for those who are suffering for the want of it. Idleness is the source of all vice amongst the poor, and this whether it be voluntary or not. And certainly it is doing a great good to provide for those, who desire to labour, but cannot find work, and are suffering for the need of it, that occupation which shall at once relieve them from immediate distress, and from the destructive temptations of a state of idleness. We certainly wish all success to this society. Its design is excellent; and so far as we can judge without having witnessed its actual operation, the provisions for carrying it into execution are exceedingly judicious. Experience, however, is the only test; and we earnestly recommend to our philanthropic readers to inquire concerning its measures, and to examine into its success, and if they find it likely to do the good which we think it promises, to enter cordially and perseveringly into its support. The following abstract of the pamphlet abovementioned, will give the necessary information to those who have not seen it.

“The design of this society is strictly charitable. It is intended to relieve want, and, at the same time, by promoting habits of industry, order and frugality, to diminish the causes of indigence. It will bestow nothing, but as the reward of labor. It is not, however, to be supposed, that the proceeds of the industry employed will reimburse the expenses of the society. Experience has proved that such institutions cannot support themselves, and that, with the utmost care and economy, there will still be an annual deficiency to be supplied. It is not to take away the necessity of giving, but to furnish the means of giving in the most useful way, that this society is formed.”

“The price paid by the society for labour will in general be considerably lower than the ordinary rate of wages. The necessity for this is obvious. If full wages were paid, many might be induced to leave regular employment in order to obtain work from the society. But it is only those who are unable to obtain work for themselves, and who prefer even low wages to idleness and beggary, that we may wish to draw to our doors. On the other hand, the common standard price will be charged by the society for the labour done. Were it not so, a temptation would be offered to withdraw work from the valuable class of labouring poor, and bring it to the society, thus depriving many industrious persons of the occupations on which they depend. Such an effect, it is manifest, would increase instead of diminishing the evil, and would be directly opposite to the main design of the institution.”

“The first meeting of the subscribers was holden on the 27th day of January, A. D. 1820, when the constitution was read and approved, and signed by twenty-two ladies.” The institution went into operation on a small scale, March 1st; and from the reports of the managers it appears, “that more than two hundred persons applied for work in March, April and May, and to about half only of them could employment be given, and that in very small quantities, the whole amount of payment for work not exceeding two hundred dollars. The applicants have hitherto behaved with great propriety, and have expressed great satisfaction in the prospects afforded by the institution, and much gratitude for the smallest supply of work. Most of them have appeared very destitute; a large part of them are widows with families of young children; the rest are principally mothers of



families, whose husbands are either unable to procure employment or negligent about providing for their families, and leave to them the task of maintaining their children and themselves. Should this society meet sufficient encouragement to enable it to relieve this class of the poor, by furnishing them with work, the community may retain them as respectable members: but without such aid, they must, in all probability, be reduced to beggary, with its consequent degradations."

The report of the Managers for the second month states "that about eighty of the women, who applied during March, have been visited at their houses. They have all been found objects for the charity of the society, and apparently without bad habits. The work has always been returned, and no improper feelings have been expressed by those, who have applied for it without success."

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### OBITUARY NOTICE.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE.]

Died, Sept. 8th, 1820. at Shelburne, Mr. ROYALL W. SMITH, aged 21 years, son of the Rev. Preserved Smith, of Rowe. He was a graduate at Williams' College, in 1818, where he distinguished himself as a scholar, a companion, and a christian. In the choice of a profession he devoted himself to theology. For the purpose of pursuing his studies, and of preparing himself for the Christian ministry, he went in Oct. 1818, to the University at Cambridge, where he might store his mind with useful knowledge, and be free to adopt that system of religious faith, which, after patient and scrupulous inquiry under able and learned Professors, should appear to him to be founded on scripture. Here he remained about a year, assiduously engaged in the acquisition of knowledge, and in a conscientious search after Divine Truth. He considered all branches of useful knowledge important to a Christian minister, as by them his mind would be strengthened, and he be enabled to urge with more power and effect the doctrines of Christianity. His range of study was too great for his constitution, which does not appear to have been ever strong; it was found that in the ardour of inquiry and assiduity of application, his health began to decline, pallor had taken the place of freshness, cheerfulness had in some measure been succeeded by pensiveness, his strength was diminished by wasting disease, the symptoms appeared alarming to the physician he consulted, and he was obliged, though with much reluctance, to remit the intenseness of his application in the sacred inquiries in which he was engaged. After some weeks of careful but unsuccessful exertions to restore his health, without giving up his favorite pursuits, he left Cambridge in April last, for Rowe, in hope of soon returning with fresh vigour, to renew his studies with increased ardour. But he was disappointed. The symptoms, which he carried away with him, were suspected by many who saw him, and were familiar with him, to be the symptoms of death. He continued seeking relief from his disorders, amid the anxiety of friends and the hopes of christians, until he was seized with the typhus fever, which hurried him to the grave.

His literary attainments were highly respected by those who had an opportunity of knowing them. While at College, he was studious and diligent, and made rapid advances in sound learning; and while at the Theological School, he judiciously apportioned his time for human and divine knowledge. He was one who valued time, and was resolved that none of

it should be wasted in useless pursuits, or in trifling conversation, but that all of it should be used 'to the Glory of God.'

His Theological attainments, though much interrupted by sickness, were deserving very high praise. He considered the Christian minister as bound to study the scriptures, rather than the metaphysics of the schoolmen; from the former to learn what Christianity is, and to prepare himself for preaching the Gospel of Christ. He pursued this course, and conscientiously came to the result, that the doctrines of Unitarianism are the doctrines of the Bible. The writer of this notice, has often heard him express his decided disbelief in the Orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement, and his firm belief in the supremacy of the Father, and in human salvation only by the free grace of God the Father.

His modesty was such as to reserve part of what he possessed, and always to indulge us in receiving more than we expected. There was no danger of trusting him for judicious remarks; he conveyed more than his modesty would allow him to express. Also it may be said that, though none ever found any fault in him, he was better than he pretended or seemed to be. Modesty is one of the surest tests of goodness, and in him it was genuine. Though his sensibility might seem excessive, it in reality never amounted to a fault. In his moral character, it was ennobled to tenderness and respect for others. He not merely gave deference to others, but, in humility, seemed 'to prefer them.'

His moral character was not only free from dissipation and unlawful propensities, and pure from moral stains, but there was something positive in it. All that he was, was on the side of rectitude. His piety was carried into life so as to bear with composure and christian patience the evils of the human condition, and to perform the duties of a candidate for Heaven, with fidelity and cheerfulness. He endeavoured always to receive benefit from acts of devotion, believing that the Grace of God is given to every one with perfect impartiality, and that, if it be inoperative, it is so because man resists the influences of the Holy Spirit, and not because God does not afford them. He was a firm believer in Christianity, and a communicant at the table of our Lord. He considered and with reason, the Communion of the Supper, obligatory on all believers in Christianity, by the authority of Christ, and also recommended by its beneficial tendencies to gratitude and devotion.

His attachment to religion was manifested in his choice of the ministry for a profession in life, in prosecuting the studies relating to it with diligence and zeal, and in making some worldly sacrifices on its account. He expressed a willingness to submit to more worldly privations, if it were necessary for religion. Little did he think, that in the mean time he was sacrificing his life in preparing for the Christian ministry.

One year ago he was in the vigour of youth, in the cheerfulness of health, in the vivacity of hope, in the ardent diligence of study; but in this short period what a change! He is wasted away, and 'returned to the dust.' May his death give warning not in vain; but may those who knew him consider, that they too, in one year, nay in one week, may be reckoned with those who *have been* on the earth, but who are now gone to their eternal home. 'Be ye therefore ready.'

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#### ORDINATION.

A NEW Congregational Society has been within the last two years formed in Springfield, in this state, and a beautiful Church erected and given to



them, by Jonathan Dwight, Esq. On Thursday, Oct. 12, the Rev. William B. O. Peabody, was ordained their pastor. The services were peculiarly interesting to a crowded auditory. Rev. Dr. Bancroft, of Worcester made the introductory prayer. Rev. Dr. Ware, of Harvard University, delivered a Sermon from Cor. xiii. 9th, "*We know in part.*" Rev. Dr. Porter, of Roxbury, made the ordaining prayer. Rev. Dr. Prince, of Salem, gave the charge. Rev. Mr. Francis of Watertown, gave the right hand of fellowship. Rev. Mr. Willard, of Deerfield, made the concluding prayer. The music under the direction of Mr. Albro, was uncommonly fine.

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*Notice of the New-York Edition of Lord Byron's Works, published by William B. Gilley. 1820.*

WE do not know that there is, in the whole compass of English literature, a poem more thoroughly immoral, than Lord Byron's *Don Juan*. It is written in a sort of drunken defiance and mockery of all that is decent and honorable. Its wit consists in degrading the better and holier affections by associations with something mean and vile. Its subjects of ridicule are religion, and virtue, and human misery. The laugh raised is sometimes such as its author might enjoy, if he were to go to a hospital to torment the sick and dying, and then jeer at their outcries and uncouth contortions; and at other times, the merriment is of the same character, as he might feel in decoying a modest and respectable woman into a brothel, and making jests upon her confusion and tears. The brutal and unmanly attack upon his wife, near the commencement of the poem, corresponds with all that follows; and, we may add, corresponds but too well with some other publications of its author. The writer of this work has exhibited himself in the lowest state of moral degradation as a profligate and shameless buffoon, taking pleasure in exciting disgust and contempt. His morbid love of being talked about in some way or another, his feverish craving after notoriety, the great secret of many of his vices and follies, will hardly find gratification hereafter by the same kind of writing. Since the publication of this poem, he has put it out of his power to surprize the world, or excite its attention, by any outrage upon decency, however loathsome or strange. It has been said that there are passages of fine poetry in this publication. It may be so. We are not intrepid enough to admire and relish fine poetry, when found in such a connexion. According to the best theory of taste, the crimson of a rose-cancer would be as beautiful as that of the rose itself, if it were not for our associations; and when we can so far overcome the force of these associations, as to be delighted with the former, we may then, perhaps, look out for the beauties of *Don Juan*.

We are informed that when the two first cantos of this poem were sent in manuscript to England, Lord Byron's publisher, Mr. Murray, declined to publish them. They were accordingly returned to the author. He sent them back with some alterations, and they were then published, but not with Mr. Murray's name. Two additional cantos have since been sent, which that gentleman, we understand, positively declines being the agent in giving to the public. We wish that the conduct of some of our American booksellers did not present a striking contrast to what has just been stated. No sooner did this infamous poem appear in England, than an edition of it was issued from one of the presses in New-York; and now, within a few weeks, we have an edition of Lord Byron's works, in

which this poem is, *for the first time*, incorporated, and published by WILLIAM B. GILLEY, of New-York. We should rejoice, if there should be moral feeling enough in the community to leave the edition upon the publisher's hands. The man who would commit such a work to the press, and increase, as far as possible, its circulation, by connecting it with the other works of Lord Byron, would, without doubt, print as many copies of Voltaire's *Pucelle d'Orleans*, as he could hope to find a sale for.

The want of moral feeling discovered in this readiness to circulate the worst poison through the community, for the sake of some paltry profit, is rendered more glaring by the hypocritical squeamishness, which has been manifested by many of these same booksellers of New-York, about the sale of works of a different character. Their consciences are of such a peculiar sort of tenderness that they cannot sell, for instance, Mr. Buckminster's or Dr. Freeman's Sermons, but are quite ready to publish and sell Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, or the most licentious of Moore's poems. It may be said, that we ought rather to speak of those under whose direction the booksellers act, than of the booksellers themselves. Perhaps we ought. Let the blame attach wherever it may belong. At all events, it is one of the most striking examples of the fact, that a zeal for orthodoxy has often very little to do with a zeal for religion or morality.

How long the citizens of New-York will continue to submit with patience to the police, of which their booksellers are the ostensible agents, established for preserving their orthodox faith from contagion, is their concern rather than ours. We only wish that they would insist that an equally rigid guard should be kept over their morals, and over what is really essential in their religion.

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#### TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

We find in a copy, which has reached us, of a second impression of Art. 10th. in our last review, the following note relative to our statement of the number of episcopal parishes in the states of New-York and Maryland.

"There is much reason to believe that in regard to the numbers mentioned in this place, the reviewer is under a mistake. From a list published the present year, it appears that in the diocese of New-York, there are only sixty-six preachers, several of whom are missionaries, and in that of Maryland, the number is forty-eight."

The list here referred to, we had before us, but as it was a list of *ministers*, and we were speaking of *parishes*, we did not consider it as furnishing the information we wanted. We took pains to be accurate, and wrote to the southward to obtain the statement which we gave. In the last number of the *Churchman's Magazine*, we find it corroborated as to the diocese of New-York, which is stated to consist of "the bishop, fifty-six presbyters, fifteen deacons, and *one hundred and eighteen* organized congregations." We have no reason to doubt that we were equally correct, as to Maryland. The thing is of no consequence, but we would not seem to make statements at a venture.

A translation of the second letter of Herder on the study of Divinity, was prepared for this number, and also a review of the posthumous pamphlet of Dr. Watts; but excluded by the press of other matter. They will appear in our next.

END OF NO. 5.—VOL. II.